



The Unsettled Hearts in the West:
Self-Representations of Diasporic Chinese Self-Narratives
in English, 1980s–1990s

by

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Prefatory Notes

Chinese names

The Pinyin transliteration system is used to assist with Chinese names and sentences. Names of well-known Chinese figures in history spelt in Wade-Giles are unchanged when they appear in quotations, but they are spelt in Pinyin in the text. For example, Ssu-ma Chien in quotation is spelt as Sima Qian in Pinyin in the main text.

In respect to Chinese immigrant authors' names, some authors adopt the Western custom of placing the family name last, for example, Nien Cheng. Some authors reserve the Chinese custom of placing the family name first, for example, Liang Heng. In this thesis Chinese authors' names are kept unchanged in accordance with how the name appears in the texts.

Acronyms

CPC Communist Party of China

PRC People's Republic of China

Categories of texts

1. Chinese intellectuals' texts

Texts written by those Chinese who had completed their education before the foundation of the People's Republic of China and worked as professionals such as teachers, scholars, writers, engineers, and so on when the Cultural Revolution started in 1966.

2. 'Educated youths' texts

Texts written by those Chinese who belong to the Cultural Revolution generation and spent some time in the countryside as 'educated youths' during the decade of the Cultural Revolution, 1966–1976. Chinese literary

critics consider them as a group for their texts focus on their experiences in the countryside.

3. *The Cultural Revolution generation's texts*

Texts written by those Chinese who were born around the foundation of the People's Republic of China and who spent their adolescent years during the Cultural Revolution.

4. *The 'literature of the wounded'*

A body of English-language literature by Chinese who migrated to the West during the 1980s and published in the West during the 1980s and 1990s. Western literary critics categorise them as a particular subgenre of autobiography, labelling this body of work the 'literature of the wounded.'

5. *'Scar literature'*

A body of Chinese-language literature appearing in China in the years following the Cultural Revolution that describes the experiences of being victimised during the Cultural Revolution.

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Abstract

This thesis considers the autobiographical narratives authored by Chinese immigrants to the West that were published in English during the 1980s and 1990s. Its particular focus is those texts recounting experiences during the Cultural Revolution. Common to these texts are descriptions of the authors' victimisation under the rule of the Communist Party of China. The accounts of their traumatic experiences as well as the sheer number of like publications mean these texts constitute a particular subgenre of autobiography. Literary critics label this body of work the 'literature of the wounded.'

These personal accounts of the authors' experiences during the decade of China's Cultural Revolution—1966–1976—are widely accepted by Western readers as reliable sources of knowledge about Communist China. However, many scholars are circumspect about the facticity of these texts, particularly in relation to the specifics of the Cultural Revolution. While acknowledging the destructiveness of the Cultural Revolution, they argue that these traumatic narratives are also in several ways products of Cold War thinking, Western cultural influences and a ready market for such texts. Autobiographical tales of victimisation under Communist systems found a ready Western readership.

This thesis argues that these immigrant Chinese narratives reflect the cultural and literary heritages of both China and the West. Influenced by these two distinct heritages, these diasporic Chinese authors retrieve those materials from their respective experiences that best articulate a particular construction of themselves. In order to argue this, the thesis is grounded in a comparative reading of this body of diasporic narratives—the 'literature of the wounded'—against the narratives written

by these diasporic authors' China-based contemporaries who also have written of their experiences during the Cultural Revolution. To flesh this out the thesis sketches the history of autobiographical writing in China (although the ancient texts were not recognised as autobiography until comparatively recently) and Western forms of autobiography.

Introduction

The 1980s and 1990s saw numerous narratives authored by Chinese immigrants to the West recounting their personal ordeals during China's Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), that were written in English and published in the West. They are displayed collectively in prominent locations in bookstores, and packaged and tagged uniformly, and stand out as a readily identifiable category—diasporic Chinese autobiography pertaining to the Cultural Revolution and Communist China (see Hung 2003, 6–8; Tong and Hung 2007, 59–60). Many are bestsellers. Jung Chang's *Wild Swans: Three Daughters of China* (1991) has sold the most, and is often recommended to Western audiences who 'care at all about the history of China in the twentieth century' (quoted in Chang 1993[1991], frontmatter). Other popular texts include Liang Heng's *Son of the Revolution* (1983), Nien Cheng's *Life and Death in Shanghai* (1995[1986]), Ningkun Wu's *A Single Tear: A Family's Persecution, Love, and Endurance in Communist China* (1993), Anchee Min's *Red Azalea: Life and Love in China* (1993), and Rae Yang's *Spider Eaters: A Memoir* (1997). This thesis focuses on these six texts and five other well-received ones (see Appendix 1), and considers how these authors recount their experiences during the Cultural Revolution and articulate particular constructions of their selves.

As these authors had spent a significant part of their life in China, including the entire period of the Cultural Revolution, their personal accounts are widely accepted by Western readers as reliable sources of knowledge about Chinese culture and society, the People's Republic of China (hereafter 'PRC'), and the Communist Party of China (hereafter 'CPC'). Common to these texts is the portrayal of the

unbearable darkness of China under the rule of the CPC. Backed up by the ostensible authenticity of the genre of autobiography, these texts are recognised by Western readers as truthful depictions of China. General readers' comments illuminate this reception. 'Customer reviews' posted on www.amazon.com and 'community reviews' on www.goodreads.com generally agree that these personal narratives are honest and factual. A reader named 'William1' thinks highly of Nien Cheng's *Life and Death in Shanghai* and Anchee Min's *Red Azalea*, saying that 'I'd always thought Cheng's book unassailable. But now I'm going to raise *Red Azalea* to a level with it ... *Red Azalea* is a masterpiece of emotional honesty.'¹ Apart from online comments, book reviews promote these texts as testimonies to the evils of the Communist system and manifestations of the authors' individual power against the totalitarianism and tyranny of the Communist government. For instance, Ningkun Wu's *A Single Tear* is recommended as a firsthand personal account of individual courage and family's love authored by a Chinese intellectual. It was thanks to his own courage and a family love that he was able to survive in China during 'the time of tumult and repression under Mao [Mao Zedong, hereafter "Mao"]' (quoted in Wu and Li 1993, back cover). Since Jung Chang recounts her story under the historical veil of modern China, her *Wild Swans* is assessed as a book with 'an unmatched insight into the making of modern China and the impact of war and totalitarianism on the destinies of a quarter of the human race' (quoted in Chang 1993[1991], frontmatter). As one reviewer comments, *Wild Swans* is 'another damning indictment of the communist system' (Thurston 1992, 1207). Similar comments are also made on other texts in this category of literature.

¹ https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/92936.Red_Azalea?ref=ru_lihp_nsup_binrsh_0_mclk-nup7785998304. Retrieved on 13 June 2016.

Besides general recognition, these texts also gain some authority from educational institutions. It is not unusual for teachers at secondary schools, universities, and colleges to use these texts as informative references in courses on Chinese history and culture (see for example Kong 1999, 240). For instance, a high school history teacher and a university associate professor of Social Studies Education in the US co-authored an article explaining how they use these Chinese immigrants' personal narratives to meet their educational purposes. They consider these books as 'appropriate and effective texts' for teaching middle and high school students about the rule of Mao, totalitarian China, and the evils of a Communist system (Cafarella and Bohan 2012, 128). Following this idea they work out a set of teaching methods to utilise these texts in guiding students to understand the totalitarianism of Communist societies and thereby foster the appreciation of their own life in the US. They hope to lead students to the conclusion: 'A society without freedom of the press tends towards Orwellian totalitarianism' (Cafarella and Bohan 2012, 131). This article is another reflection of the reception of these Chinese personal narratives in the West. And also it is evident that these texts paint a generally dark image of the PRC and the CPC through telling personal stories of victimisation against the canvas of the Cultural Revolution.

However, despite wide Western acceptance of the description of violence, torture, and humiliation, an increasing number of scholars are circumspect about the facticity of these accounts, particularly in relation to the specifics of the Cultural Revolution. Thematically, these texts are all structured in a linear tragedy–triumph–freedom pattern, beginning with Communist China and ending in the West. Regardless of the nuances of individual experiences and personal backgrounds, and regionally differentiated political conditions, these authors all describe a sense of

outrage and victimisation in China and a fortunate escape from the Cultural Revolution to Western freedom and self-realisation (Geng 2008, iii). The same leitmotif appears in the denunciation of the rule of the CPC. For this commonality as well as the substantial quantity of like publications, this body of literature coheres into a particular subgenre of autobiography. Literary critics label this genre ‘survival literature’ or ‘literature of suffering’ (Zarrow 1999, 184, 167), or the ‘literature of the wounded’ (Mirsky 1992).

While acknowledging the destructiveness of the Cultural Revolution, critics argue that this ‘literature of the wounded’ is also in several ways a product of the legacy of Cold War thinking, Western cultural influences and the existence of a ready market for such narratives. It is too obtuse to be a feasible picture of this complex and nuanced era of the Cultural Revolution. By narrating the ordeals suffered in China, these texts depict the Chinese people living in suffocation caused by political persecution, prevailing violence, ubiquitous victimisation, suppression of their subjectivity, repression of sexuality, and so forth. Such portrayals of victimhood provide testimonies to the ready conceptions of the CPC government and its leader Mao: the totalitarianism of the CPC and the tyranny of Mao (Mackerras 1991[1989], 210–217). The canvas on which their stories are narrated—the Cultural Revolution—is pictured in ways that help ‘the educated public in the West’ to ‘grasp China’s Cultural Revolution in terms of the larger pattern of totalitarian disaster, for which the Holocaust is a metonym’ (Zarrow 1999, 165–167). But in fact the Cultural Revolution is essentially not equivalent to those twentieth-century holocausts like the Nazi genocide (see for example Gao 1994; Schwartz 1960). The undifferentiated denunciation of the CPC articulated in a similar formula suggests an appeal to the Western propensity to stereotype Communist China as a brutal totalitarian state,

which is a legacy of Cold War thinking (Gao 2008; Gao 1993, 1994; Geng 2008; Hung 2006; Hung 2003; Kong 1999; Tong and Hung 2007; Zarrow 1999).

Scholars argue that this taste for anti-Communist rhetoric is a reflection that the Orientalist discourse argued by Edward Said in his *Culture and Imperialism* (1993) and *Orientalism* (2003[1978]) continues shaping Westerners' perceptions of the 'otherness' of all things Asian, Communist China included. Being Chinese natives who wrote their personal lives set against the PRC in English and published in the West, these authors turned to Western English speakers for assistance. They would also have been exposed to anti-Communist discourse. Deeply immersed in and affected by Westerners' appeal of propounding a brutal Communist China, these authors failed to produce balanced pictures of themselves and of the CPC and the PRC during the time of the Cultural Revolution. For this, many scholars argue that these texts have satisfied, and meanwhile created, a neo-fascination with Communist China—'Red China'—giving birth to a new Orientalism (Chow 1991, 54; Grice 2002, 111–113; Delton 2010; Mackerras 1991[1989], 267; Tang 2010; Xiao 2014; Zarrow 1999, 168).

However, recounted against more objective analyses of this era, many contradictory and untenable descriptions are found in these texts (see for example Gao 1993; 1994, 16; 1995, 50, 52–54; Kong 1999, 241, 244, 247; Zarrow 1999, 176–177). For example, Mobo Gao, a scholar specialising in modern Chinese history, argues that the experiences that Jung Chang recounts as testimony to her victimisation—such as being sent down to the countryside, working as a barefoot doctor before going to university—conversely demonstrate the privileges enjoyed by members of high-ranking official families like Jung Chang's, because 'millions and millions of children in the countryside had never been given the chance to improve

their literacy or to show their aptitude' (Gao 1995, 53–54). Jung Chang's narrative ignores the broad social and historical situation that she emerged from. As argued by Gao, although the radicalism of the Cultural Revolution disastrously affected China's education, Mao's intention was to 'narrow the gap between the city and the country, industry and agriculture, and mental and manual labor' (Gao 1995, 54). Similar arguments are found in reviews of Jung Chang and Jon Halliday's *Mao: The Unknown Story* (2005). Chang and Halliday's book about Mao is built on the same perception of the CPC and Mao that Chang expressed in her *Wild Swans*. Fourteen reviews of this book are collected in *Was Mao Really a Monster? The Academic Response to Chang and Halliday's 'Mao: The Unknown Story'* (Benton and Lin 2009). A majority of reviewers agree that Chang and Halliday's biases against Mao are apparent, and the portrayal of Mao contains many errors (see for example Cheek 2009, 55; Li 2010, 408; see also Gao 1994; Han 2000).

Differing from historians' analyses, literary critics interpret the portrayal of victimhood as the product of literary construction (see for example Somerson 1997; Xu 2000). For example, it is argued that the lesbian affair between Anchee Min and her female leader recounted in *Red Azalea* is a highly fictionalised construct to demonstrate the suppressed life that Anchee Min suffered under the rule of the CPC. It implies that it was because of the high pressure of political life and the suppression of normal sexual development that Anchee Min and her leader developed a lesbian interest. However, underneath the superficial description of deprivation of subjectivity by the CPC state, often referred to as 'brainwashing,' is Anchee Min's agency in meeting her private and individualistic proclivities and interests through developing romantic relationships with her direct leaders (Xu 2004). Such contradiction between the overt proclamation of being 'brainwashed' by the CPC and the underlying

agentic subjectivity is commonly found in other texts in the ‘literature of the wounded’ category. For example, as illustrated by Liang Heng, Rae Yang and Zhai Zhenhua’s interpretations of their experiences during the Cultural Revolution, their participation in the Cultural Revolution was the consequence of the CPC’s indoctrination of blind loyalty to the CPC state. It is the root of their suffering. However, increasing research suggests that Anchee Min’s age cohort who supposedly had been ‘brainwashed’ by the CPC, were in fact a ‘thinking generation.’ Scholars argue that it is because they lived through a series of related events during the Cultural Revolution that they hence experienced a conflict between the ‘rosy picture of socialist China painted by state propaganda’ and actual lived reality, which led them to reflective analysis about themselves and this significant era (Duke 1985, 182–208; Xu 2010; Yang 2000, 2003). As the legacy of the Cultural Revolution endures, further evidence is emerging supporting the argument that the Cultural Revolution unintentionally generated a ‘thinking generation.’

The current century has seen more and more academic works and personal accounts produced inside and outside China. These attempts have deepened the understanding of this period of history. A relatively comprehensive and more balanced picture is emerging about the PRC during the time of the Cultural Revolution. More and more scholars agree that these 1980s–1990s autobiographical narratives are primarily the products of literary construction. The clear-cut pictures of victimhood and the evils of the PRC in the Maoist era presented by these diasporic texts are increasingly proving questionable and problematic. *Some of Us: Chinese Women Growing Up in the Mao Era* (Zhong, Wang, and Bai 2001) is a collection of memoirs written in English and published in the West by nine diasporic Chinese women. They were born and grew up in the PRC of the Maoist era and currently live

in the US. Their life trajectories are almost the same as authors such as Jung Chang, Liang Heng, Rae Yang, Zi-ping Luo, and other authors who grew up during the Cultural Revolution and contribute to the ‘literature of the wounded.’ The authors of *Some of Us* were motivated to challenge the overwhelming traumatic description of the ‘literature of the wounded’ about their generation. In their words, the publication of *Some of Us* is to provide ‘a counternarrative to the popularly received Red Guards and female victim or sexual repression memoirs found in the West’ (Zhong, Wang, and Bai 2001, xiii). Unhappy about their lives being inaccurately represented by *Wild Swans*, *Red Azalea* and other similar texts published during the 1980s and 1990s in English in the West, they decided to tell their own stories in *Some of Us*. Given the collective memory and similar personal experiences, their accounts provide valuable insights into reading the ‘literature of the wounded.’

The personal accounts collected in *Some of Us* challenge the narratives of victimhood under the rule of the CPC in the Maoist era. They particularly question the painting of the PRC as an exercise in state-sanctioned ‘brainwashing,’ arguing that such a picture is inaccurate and a subjective construction. As these nine women are all academics from US universities, their personal accounts blend with academically reflective analysis and thus become pointed and focused when performing as the ‘counternarrative’ to the ‘literature of the wounded.’ They argue that the overwhelming suppression of, or the entire deprivation of subjectivity portrayed by, the ‘literature of the wounded’ is literally constructed. Such a portrayal simplifies the historical and social complexities. As the editors of *Some of Us* articulate in the introduction, the stories in this collection, ‘each in its own way, tap into the much entangled dimensions of the social and various public and private domains often overlooked or dismissed by scholars and unexpected by Western reading public in

general' (Zhong, Wang, and Bai 2001, xiii). Harriet Evans, a professor of Chinese cultural studies, in welcoming this book, states:

At last, Anglophone readers have an alternative to the stereotypes of suffering and persecution that dominate the numerous autobiographical accounts of the Mao years. Mao's rule involved crimes on a scale and of an order that have still not been properly accounted for. The experience of many who grew up under Mao's 'red banner', including those contributing to this volume, does not deny this, but it suggests a much more complex history than the accepted narrative of the 'victim' genre offer (Evans 2006, 167).

Evans's comments reflect the increasing understanding of the complexities of the Cultural Revolution, and the demand of new materials to approach this controversial but important historical event in contemporary Chinese history.

Besides personal accounts published in this century as mentioned above, scholarly publications pertaining to the Cultural Revolution are also increasing. For example, Pan Yihong's *Tempered in the Revolutionary Furnace: China's Youth in the Rustication Movement* (Pan 2003) focuses on the Chinese cohort who were sent down to the countryside during the rustication movement, which spanned approximately from the end of 1968 to the early 1980s. In this book, she brings together her historical investigations, personal interviews, and academic analysis, and reveals a complicated picture of China's youth during that particular era. As Pan emphasises, this book is 'not just a history of victimization in Communist China,'

but also, more importantly, a revelation of ‘the diverse responses of complex individuals’ (Pan 2003, 3). She further states:

I want to emphasize that in spite of the various challenges that they encountered, members of this generation searched for meaning in their lives. Most survived because they were still young with hopes and dreams. Their lives still had laughter, poetry, and songs. They were not alone. And they chose to be strong. More, they received warm care and trust from the peasants. Along with what they saw as depths of backwardness and ignorance among the peasants, millions of zhiqing also found great purity of spirit, simple kindness, and warm sympathy. It was from the peasants and from sharing with them the struggle to win a living from the stubborn soil that the children of Mao learned about humanity. Under an oppressive regime, people could still make their own choices, and many learned to maintain their dignity; many awoke to their individual minds. In this hard life, the first generation of Communist China came of age (Pan 2003, 3–4).

Pan’s work provides further evidence, besides *Some of Us*, that counters the construction of victimhood found in the ‘literature of the wounded,’ represented by *Wild Swans*, *Spider Eaters*, and *Red Azalea* among others. If consideration of the ‘literature of the wounded’ is broadened a little, Peter Seybolt’s *Throwing the Emperor from his Horse: Portrait of a Village Leader in China 1923–1995* (1996) and Dongping Han’s *The Unknown Cultural Revolution: Educational Reforms and Their Impact on China’s Rural Development* (2000) respectively provide a

multifarious picture of the villagers' daily life under the veil of the political campaigns in the Maoist era and an account of the dramatic improvement in rural education brought about by the Cultural Revolution. Generally, at the level of ordinary villagers, life during the Maoist era was not one of overarching persecution or suppression. The orthodox autobiographical narrative, as widely read in the West, of the disastrous Cultural Revolution neglects its positive side evidenced by the improvements in rural living conditions, infrastructure, agricultural practices, and rural education.

These revisionist scholarly and personal accounts emerging this century (for example Gao 2008; Gao 1994, 1995, 2002; Han 2000, 2001, 2009) suggest that the social and historical situation during the Cultural Revolution is far more complicated and multifarious than that portrayed in the 'literature of the wounded.' Nevertheless, contrasting with the broad consensus about the unreliability of the 'literature of the wounded' reached by scholars, the popular acceptance of these texts as reliable sources of knowledge about Communist China and the people living in Communist China endures. It appears that globalisation plays little role in guiding Western readers to a more critical reception of these Chinese immigrants' personal accounts that emerged during the 1980s and 1990s. Although many scholarly analyses strongly argue against the reliability of these narratives, they do not change the popular acceptance in the West of these texts as authoritative testimony. The enduring acceptance of Western readers suggests there are factors other than the legacy of Cold War thinking, a ready market for such texts, or/and Westerners' interest in China that sustain the validity of these texts.

It is notable that the current and previous analyses of these texts that appeared during the 1980s and 1990s authored by Chinese immigrants are mostly undertaken

in the domains of historiography or literary criticism. Nevertheless, little literary analysis of these texts as examples of autobiography has been undertaken. It is worth doing so, for it provides further insight into a range of other influences shaping the narratives. As China and the West have developed their own cultural and literary traditions, it is arguable that these two traditions inevitably influenced the construction of these Chinese immigrants' personal accounts. These authors grew up and were educated in China before migrating to the West.

As mentioned, despite the sheer number of autobiographies, such as those by Jung Chang, Rae Yang, Anchee Min and others who migrated to the West during the 1980s, their texts have attracted scant attention from scholars interested in autobiography. As a matter of fact, Chinese immigrants' autobiographical texts, as a whole, have been ignored in the area of autobiographical studies, both inside and outside China. Regarding autobiographical studies in China, the focus is on Chinese-language texts published in China. Regarding autobiographical studies outside China, more interest is still cast on Western natives' texts. One reason for this is that differences in cultural and linguistic expression increase the difficulty in understanding non-Westerners' accounts. Moreover, the lack of a solid definition of autobiography complicates discussions about non-Western personal narratives.

A brief overview of Chinese immigrants' personal narratives published in the US and the debates around them will illuminate this intricate situation faced by autobiographical studies. Chinese immigrants' personal narratives written in English and published in the West possibly began with Yan Phou Lee's *When I Was a Boy in China* (1887) and Yung Wing's *My Life in China and America* (1909). These two early works have long been overlooked. Only after Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood Among Ghosts* (1976) were these early

Chinese personal accounts again noticed. Kingston's *The Woman Warrior* not only achieved enormous economic success but also aroused extensive scholarly attention (Buss 1991; Cheung 2003; Cheung 1993, 2015; Lidoff 1987; Outka 1997; Wong 1993). The unique transcultural features presented in this text inspired a wide range of interests from ethnic literature, anthropology, Asian studies, to feminist studies (see for example Huntley 2001). Since Kingston's text, diasporic Chinese self-authored narratives have attracted increasing attention. The initial concern was how to define these personal accounts. The hot debate was whether these texts were autobiographies or not (Chin 1985, 109; 1991, 11; Kim 1982; Madsen 2006; Tong 1980, 233). Frank Chin, an influential cultural and literary critic, argues that Yung Wing's text is not an autobiography because Yung Wing did not present a coherent and autonomous self. In his view, presenting a coherent self is the essence of autobiography. Underpinning his argument is the notion that autobiography is a genre peculiar to Western Christian culture. With this premise, he applies a similar charge to *The Woman Warrior* and other diasporic Chinese autobiographical texts (Chin 1985, 109; 1991, 11).

However, such a Western-exclusive concept of autobiography has met with increasing challenge. King-Kok Cheung disagrees with Chin, and argues that it is almost impossible for Chinese immigrants to produce standard autobiographies in compliance with the conventions of modern Western autobiography. Personal narratives of Chinese immigrants inevitably present works that differ from orthodox Western autobiographies. This is because Chinese immigrants are unavoidably influenced by two cultural and literary heritages, Western and Chinese. Their self-expressions reflect this cultural and literary hybridity. Cheung suggests that to obviate cultural misreading of Chinese immigrants' autobiographical texts, Western

and Chinese cultures and literary traditions deserve adequate consideration. Bicultural literacy is necessary in reading diasporic Chinese personal narratives (Cheung 2015).

Cheung's suggestion is tenably persuasive. Indeed, cross-cultural autobiographical reading, specifically Chinese immigrants' self-narratives, needs to break through the canonical boundary of Western autobiography in order to place the focus of autobiographical criticism on how Chinese authors present their selves in diasporic contexts. There are two reasons for doing so. Firstly, considerable studies of Chinese life-writing have demonstrated that Chinese culture has developed a distinct genre of autobiography (Chen 1997; Cheung 2015; Dryburgh 2013, 1–20; Dryburgh and Dauncey 2013; Guo 1965[1937]; Kozo 1999; Larson 1991; Larson 1984; Taylor 1978; Wells 2003, 2009, 2015; Wu 1990; Zhu 2006[1942], etc.). Secondly, both Western and Chinese autobiographical studies illustrate that the self, culture, and the autobiographical genre are closely interconnected. Although more and more communication occurs between China and the West, their respective cultures remain recognisably divergent and distinctive. Individuals emerging from disparate cultures have formed particular ways of perceiving and expressing the self. Moving from one cultural domain to another means exposure to different concepts of subjecthood. As a literary pursuit of the self, autobiographical narrative is coincident with the way of perceiving the self that is peculiar to the culture from which it springs. For example, self-identity and the genre of Western autobiography are the products of Western culture in which individualism is privileged. As Anthony Giddens states, Western societies are characterised in part through a culture that privileges the individual subject (1991, 54–76). By contrast, Chinese culture is more

collectivist. Accordingly, Chinese autobiographies merge the individual into a broader sociocultural collectivity.

Thus, reading the cohort of autobiographical texts produced in the West by Chinese immigrants who grew up and spent most of their lifetime in China needs to consider the possible influences of these two cultures and two literary conventions. As H. Porter Abbott argues, 'Historical truth or falsity [is] important only insofar as they express the identity of the author' (Abbott 1988, 613). All sources, historical, cultural, and literary, retrieved by the authors contributing to the 'literature of the wounded' during the 1980s and 1990s in the West ultimately serve the purpose of the their self-portrayals and, in return, reveal their self-perceptions in Western contexts. By examining the legacies of both Western and Chinese autobiographical traditions and exploring how these Chinese immigrant authors utilise them, we will gain deeper insights into these diasporic autobiographical texts.

In an attempt to meet this end, a comparative approach is applied to these diasporic Chinese autobiographies by considering them in the context of China-based personal accounts. The major advantage for doing so is that a large number of literary works set against the Cultural Revolution emerged in China during the same period of the 1980s and 1990s that the 'literature of the wounded' emerged in the West. Among China-based literary works are many autobiographical narratives, although some autobiographical texts are not categorised as such due to a different understanding of what constitutes autobiography. The profusion of literature within China during the 1980s and 1990s was due to the end of the Cultural Revolution and the sudden social transformation from the Maoist emphasis on Chinese socialist ideology to Deng Xiaoping's emphasis on economic development (hereafter 'Deng') in the aftermath of the Cultural Revolution. The social transformation profoundly

and significantly changed individuals' daily lives and inspired them to reflect on their past lives and selves. Thus, a passion for writing about people and their experiences during the Cultural Revolution arose in the years following the Cultural Revolution in China. Sufficient autobiographical texts were published in China to meet the purpose of comparative readings with the Chinese immigrants' autobiographical texts that belong to the 'literature of the wounded.'

To make the comparison valid and tenable, this project selects those autobiographical texts authored by the China-based contemporaries of the authors contributing to the Western-based 'literature of the wounded.' Since the Western-based authors considered here differ in age, and thereby their experiences during the Cultural Revolution differ, this reading divides them into two age groups and categorises their texts into two clusters. These are the 'Chinese intellectuals' texts' and the 'Cultural Revolution generation's texts.' The 'Chinese intellectuals' texts' refer to the texts written by those Chinese who had completed education before the foundation of the PRC and worked as professionals—such as teachers, scholars, writers, engineers, and so on—when the Cultural Revolution started in 1966. The 'Cultural Revolution generation's texts' refer to the texts written by those Chinese who were born around the foundation of the PRC and spent their adolescent years during the Cultural Revolution.

Two Western-based Chinese intellectuals' personal accounts are considered in detail: Ningkun Wu's *A Single Tear* and Nien Cheng's *Life and Death in Shanghai*. The China-based autobiographical texts used as the references for comparison include Yang Jiang's *A Cadre School Life: Six Chapters* (1982); Tao Dun's 陶钝 *Yige zhishi fenzi de zishu* (*An Intellectual's Self-Account* 一个知识分子的自述) (1987); Bai Hanzhen's 白汉贞 *Luoye zhi mi: Yige nü jiaoshi de xinlu lichen*

(*The Secret of the Falling Leaf: A Woman Teacher's Spiritual Journey* 落叶之迷——一个女教师的心路历程) (1990); Zhang Xianliang's *Grass Soup* (1994); Xu Yuanchong's 许渊冲 *Shishui nianhua* (*Vanished Springs* 逝水年华) (2011[1996]); Dong Zhujun's 董竹君 *Wo de yige shiji* (*My Centurial Life* 我的一个世纪) (2008[1997]); Ji Xianlin's 季羨林 *Random Recollections of the Cow Shed* (*Niupeng zayi* 牛棚杂忆) (2013[1998]); and He Liyi's *Mr. China's Son: A Villager's Life* (1993) (see more in Appendix 2).

Nine texts by Western-based authors of the Cultural Revolution generation are discussed. Four of them are Liang Heng's *Son of the Revolution* (1983); Gao Yuan's *Born Red: A Chronicle of the Cultural Revolution* (1987); Zi-ping Luo's *A Generation Lost: China Under the Cultural Revolution* (1990); Jung Chang's *Wild Swans: Three Daughters of China* (1991) (See the other five texts in Appendix 1). The personal accounts selected for comparison are authored by those China-based contemporaries of these nine Western-based authors. Both China-based and Western-based writers are considered to belong to the same generation, termed as the 'Cultural Revolution generation' due to their proximity in age and common experiences during the Cultural Revolution. Three China-based autobiographical texts are used as main references for reading these nine Western-based texts. They are Liang Xiaosheng's 梁晓声 *Yige hongweibing de zibai* (*A Monologue of a Red Guard* 一个红卫兵的自白) (2006[1987]); Zhang Xincan's 张新蚕 *Hongse shaonü riji: Yige hongweibing de xinling guiji, 1966–1971* (*A Diary of a Red Adolescent Girl: A Red Guard's Spiritual Record, 1966–1971* 红色少女日记——一个红卫兵的心灵轨迹, 1966–1971) (2003); and Shi Tiesheng's 史铁生 *Wo de yaoyuan de qingping wan* (*My Faraway Qingping Bay* 我的遥远的清平湾) (2001[1983]).

Several other China-based personal accounts by those belonging to the same generation are also more or less referred to such as the personal accounts collected in the volume *Cuotuo yu jueqi: Wushiwu wei zhiqing de rensheng daolu* (*Wasting and Rising: Fifty-five Educated Youths' Life Stories* 蹉跎与崛起——五十五位知青的人生道路) edited by He Shiping 何世平 (1992); and Zhang Chengzhi 张承志 *Beifang de he* (*Rivers of the North* 北方的河) (2000[1984]).

In order to explore in what ways the cultural and literary traditions of the West and China influence these Chinese immigrants in recounting their experiences in China and their construction of the self, the heritage of so-called life-writing in the West and in China is considered. As a starting point, however, the thesis borrows William C Spengemann's argument about the three progressive forms of modern Western autobiography, found in his *The Forms of Autobiography: Episodes in the History of a Literary Genre* (1980). He argues that modern autobiography experiences three progressive forms: philosophical autobiography, historical autobiography, and poetic autobiography. From a transcendental view, these forms respectively manifest three loci of autobiographical being: the narrator's philosophical self-perception in 'auto,' the protagonist's actions in 'bio,' and the persona's symbolic presentation in 'graph.' As Spengemann explains:

Considered in terms of autobiographical form, this removal of the locus of complete being from some place outside the autobiography to the autobiography itself amounts to a transference of responsibility for the work's meanings from the narrator, who possesses the meanings of the protagonist's actions in historical autobiography and seeks the meanings of the protagonist's actions in philosophical autobiography,

to the protagonist, the fictive *persona* who enacts the meanings known or sought for by historical and philosophical narrators but has become, in *The Scarlet Letter*, the cause, the adequate symbol, and the final repository of its own meanings (Spengemann 1980, 160–161).

In other words, modern Western autobiography is the embodiment of philosophical and historical quests for self-knowledge converging on poetic expression.

Although Spengemann's consideration is based on and oriented to modern Western autobiography, his tripartite design for capturing autobiography is applicable. If the design is merely taken as an analytical framework, with its Western concept of the self ignored, all texts as long as they are narratives written by the authors about themselves can be discussed in parallel. Within this tripartite framework, the eleven Chinese immigrants' personal accounts are examined from three perspectives: how the authors perceive themselves, how they recount their experiences, and how they express themselves literarily.

Based on this tripartite design, this thesis is structured as follows. Chapter One—'Autobiography in the West and China'—investigates the conventions of Western autobiography and Chinese autobiography to lay the theoretical base for the following discussion. Chapter Two—'Chinese intellectuals' self-narratives in the West'—focuses on two diasporic Chinese intellectuals' personal narratives: *A Single Tear* and *Life and Death in Shanghai*, examining how they recount and portray themselves in the West as Chinese intellectuals who experienced 'thought reform' in the PRC during Mao's era. Chapter Three—'A generation growing up during the Cultural Revolution'—aims to map the historical and social background of the Chinese cohort who were born around the founding of the PRC in 1949 and spent

adolescence and young adulthood during the decade of the Cultural Revolution. I refer to this cohort as the 'Cultural Revolution generation.' This chapter also provides a brief literature review to see how scholars view this generation. Chapter Four—'The Cultural Revolution generation's texts: unified selves of heroes/heroines'—examines how Western-based Chinese authors of the Cultural Revolution generation portray themselves as being the heroes/heroines. Chapter Five—'The Cultural Revolution generation's texts: victimised selves as narrators'—explores how these Western-based Chinese authors of the Cultural Revolution generation narrate their stories so as to understand how they portray themselves as being the narrators. Chapter Six—'The Cultural Revolution generation's texts: entangled selves of authors'—explores how this cohort of authors regulate their selves as being the authors in response to the influences of Western and Chinese cultural and literary heritages.

This thesis concludes firstly, that literature is a carrier of culture. Culture plays a dominant role in literary representation. From a comparative perspective, Chinese culture and Western culture have developed distinct autobiographical conventions in accordance with their respective concept of the self. For the diasporic Chinese, narrating their life stories in the West not only means recounting their lives spent in China in a different cultural context, but also means exposing their stories to the influence of Western autobiographical heritage. Although their narratives and the China-based narratives are both written against the same historical and social background, the ways that they narrate stories and portray their selves differ from their China-based counterparts due to their familiarity with Western cultural and autobiographical heritages. It is this that contributes to their popular reception by Western audiences.

Secondly, memory is the art of history. It bridges the past and the present. The significance of autobiographical memory is related to the autobiographer's present life and oriented to his or her future life. Within the same temporal and spatial space, memory as 'a perpetually actual phenomenon' (Nora 1989, 8) evolves synchronically with history. The temporal and spatial continuity offers a shared site where memory and history are accommodated. Autobiographical memory that is in sync with history temporally and spatially shares conterminous values. For diasporic Chinese authors, their autobiographical memories occur in the West where the original bond between memory and history is ruptured. Their memory and historical development are no longer conterminous. The rupture between memory and history, and the in situ quality of memory, are important factors prolonging the representation of victimisation under the Cultural Revolution, while the same representation was a more transient phenomenon in China.

Thirdly, the legacies of home culture cannot be removed from these diasporic Chinese authors. Rather they shape the fundamental part of their self. Although they can elaborate their self-articulation in alignment with Western individualistic culture and construct their stories in Western autobiographical formats, or choose to appeal to the anti-Communist legacy of Cold War thinking, they still more or less maintain their 'Chineseness' in this or that way. Rae Yang and Jung Chang are the exemplars. In their texts, their selves are dominated by the Western concept of the self who is rational, unified, and individualistic. However, their collectivist selves—the national and the familial selves—are still revealed if reading is extended appropriately beyond the texts to their broader cultural and literary backgrounds. This recovery and revelation of the self presented in these life-writings by diasporic Chinese authors demonstrates the entanglement in self-identification faced by the Chinese diaspora in

the West. Their autobiographies reflect how they construct homeostatic identities through Western and Chinese cultural and autobiographical sources so as to gain a sense of subjecthood in the present.

Although this thesis is concerned with particular texts, the analysis is not primarily one of literary criticism. Rather, the thesis is interdisciplinary, and draws on a range of theoretical works germane to the broad field of Asian Studies, which is the field informing this thesis. An interdisciplinary analysis is appropriate because it permits inclusion of evidence traditionally outside the field of literary criticism but which is crucial to gaining insight into broader influences shaping the texts under consideration. The interdisciplinary approach brings to light significant facets that remain hidden in the interstices of more singular and constrained analyses, notwithstanding the insights that other disciplines bring. Hence although this thesis provides a close reading of several texts, it does so through the framework of Asian Studies.

Chapter One

Autobiography in the West and China

Defining precisely what constitutes autobiography is difficult: it is a slippery genre. It is now agreed, however, that autobiography as a narrative pursuit has existed in many cultures for a long time. Apart from Western autobiography, a wide range of non-Western texts are now included in the genre: African (Berger 2010), Arabian (Kilpatrick 1991; Reynolds 2001), Japanese (Saeki 1981; Seidensticker 1999), Egyptian (Porter 2001), Africo-American (Andrews 1986; Silva 2005), and Chinese (Bauer 1964; Dryburgh and Dauncey 2013; Kozo 1999; Larson 1991; Wu 1990). These non-Western autobiographical studies on the one hand demonstrate the universality and diversity of autobiographical expression, and on the other challenge the prevalent notion of ‘autobiography’ as a specific Western cultural and literary artefact. Consequently, scholars are cautious about labelling non-Western texts in case the use of the term signifies a process of ‘intellectual colonising’ (see for example Moore-Gilbert 2006a, 2006b). As Georges Gusdorf argues of contact with the West:

a concern [e.g. an Augustinian and Christian concern] that has been of good use in his [Augustine] systematic conquest of the universe and that he has communicated to men of other cultures; but those men will thereby have been annexed by a sort of intellectual colonizing to a mentality that was not their own. When Gandhi tells his own story, he is using Western means to defend the East. And the moving testimonies collected by Westermann in his *Autobiographies d’*

Africans convey the shock of traditional civilizations on coming into contact with Europeans (Gusdorf 1980[1956], 29).

To avoid the implication of ‘intellectual colonisation’ of non-Western autobiography by Western cultural forms, many scholars prefer the term ‘life-writing.’ Articles published in two leading academic journals—*Biography* and *Auto/Biography Studies* first published in 1978 and 1985 respectively—illuminate the terminological shift from ‘autobiography’ to ‘life-writing,’ an explicit trend since the 1990s. Nevertheless, the term ‘life-writing’ is too broad to be a perfect substitute. Hence many terms are used in parallel: autobiography, autobiographical writing, ‘self-life-writing’, personal account, personal narrative, memoir, and so forth. As this thesis does not attempt a definitive explanation of what autobiography is, except in broad terms, the terminology appearing in relevant scholarship is not of particular concern. This thesis uses multiple terms for this genre, corresponding with the terminology used in relevant literary criticism.

In this thesis ‘autobiography’ is loosely considered as a term referring to any narrative written by the author about the author’s self, as signified by the three components of the word—‘auto-,’ ‘bio-,’ and ‘-graph.’ It is assumed that these three components indicate three loci of autobiographical being. According to Spengemann, these are respectively the philosophical self-perception embedded in ‘auto;’ the protagonist in ‘bio;’ and the persona in ‘graph’ (Spengemann 1980, 160–161). Don Grant’s terminology is clearer and easier to work with than Spengemann’s. Grant terms these three loci of autobiographical being as hero/heroine, narrator and author respectively (Grant 1990, 312). This thesis examines how this tripartite identity—

hero/heroine, narrator and author—of the autobiographical being in selected texts are articulated in the cultural and literary traditions of the West and China.

Western autobiography: development and conventions

Emerging from one of the predominant civilisations in the world, Western autobiographical practices date back to ancient times. However, considering autobiography as a particular genre is surprisingly recent. Groundwork was undertaken by the German philosopher Georg Misch (1878–1965). His multivolume work *Geschichte der Autobiographie* published in 1907, later translated into English as *A History of Autobiography in Antiquity* (1950), had a significant influence on Western autobiographical studies. It overtures the so-called ‘keynote’ of autobiographical studies for later Western scholars—the individual. This keynote derived from Misch’s attempt to trace the origin of Enlightenment individuality, through an archaeological investigation of a vast body of self-written texts ranging from ancient Oriental literary documents to Augustus’s *Monumentum Ancyranum*² and Saint Augustine’s *Confessions* (ca. 400). His inquiries led to the conclusion that Augustine is the ‘first modern man’ presenting Enlightenment individuality in his autobiography (Misch 1950, 17).

Misch’s quest was to trace the origins of individuality, not to define the autobiographical genre. Moreover, he argued that texts in Greek and Roman literature would suggest that the European concept of autobiography ‘based on the state of affairs in modern times’ is false (Misch 1950, 16). However, his conclusion of Augustine being the ‘first modern man’ gained popular recognition from scholars who particularly valued Enlightenment individuality. A propensity to understand autobiography as the expression of Enlightenment individuality gained currency in

² The inscription of the *Res Gestae Divi Augusti* (*Deeds of the Divine Augustus*) inscribed after the death of Augustus in 14 AD. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Monumentum_Ancyranum. Retrieved on 27 March 2017.

the mid-twentieth century. Retrospectively, Augustine's *Confessions* was canonised as the first and standard text of autobiography.

Among earlier influential critiques is Gusdorf's 'Conditions and Limits of Autobiography' (1980[1956]). James Olney stated that this essay is the first essay fully and clearly laying out all the questions and concerns in autobiographical studies from 1956 to 1978—'philosophical, psychological, literary, and more generally humanistic' (Olney 1980a, 9). The most influential and cited argument of Gusdorf's is that the sense of autobiography in expressing the Enlightenment concept of self is peculiar to Western culture. He states:

If Augustine's *Confessions* offer us a brilliantly successful landmark right at the beginning, one nevertheless recognizes immediately that this is a late phenomenon in Western culture, coming at that moment when the Christian contribution was grafted onto classical traditions. Moreover, it would seem that autobiography is not to be found outside of our cultural area; one would say that it expresses a concern peculiar to Western man (Gusdorf 1980[1956], 29).

Gusdorf's exclusive notion of autobiography is generally considered to be the start of the Western-centred concept of autobiography. Autobiography is defined as a genre exclusively developed from Western culture, expressing the peculiar concern of a Christian self.

The 1970s and particularly 1980s saw considerable theoretical discussions around the definition of autobiography, which contributed to the establishment of autobiographical studies as a literary discipline. Early influential contributors include

Roy Pascal's *Design and Truth in Autobiography* (1960); Philippe Lejeune's 'Autobiographical Contract' (1975), Paul de Man's 'Autobiography as De-facement' (1979), followed by *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical* (Olney 1980c), *Studies in Autobiography* (Olney 1988), and *Autobiography: The Self Made Text* (Goodwin 1993). However, these analyses of the particular led to the rejection of the concept of autobiography altogether, or the argument that nothing exists in the realm of literature but autobiography. Olney argues that autobiography is 'the most elusive of literary documents' (Olney 1980a, 4). Although there are discernible conventions, there are no obligatory laws or rigid rules that must be observed by the person seeking to translate his/her life into writing (Olney 1980a, 3). By the end of the 1980s, it was widely held that the rubric 'autobiography' only works in a general sense. Furthermore, with the increasing depth of autobiographical studies, Gusdorf's view that autobiography is an exclusive product of modern Christian culture appears limited (see for example Howarth 1974; Lejeune 1982[1975]; Man 1979). Based on the analyses of Richard Wright, Paul Valéry and WB Yeats's autobiographical texts, Olney argued that 'I believe we have a sufficient demonstration of the rich variousness of autobiography and clear evidence of the stubborn reluctance of autobiography to submit to prescriptive definitions of restrictive generic bounds' (Olney 1980b, 267).

As mentioned, despite the ambiguity of the delimitation of the genre of autobiography, autobiographies emerging from different cultures are discernible and distinguishable. Western and Chinese autobiographies, for example, reflect their respective cultural and literary heritage. As for Western autobiography, Augustine's *Confessions* retains its canonical position and continues shaping today's autobiographical practice. Augustine's *Confessions* is recognised as the start of

Western autobiography in its modern guise. According to James Goodwin, the close followers are Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Confessions* (written 1766–1770; first complete publication 1788) and Benjamin Franklin's *Autobiography* (written 1771–1790; first complete publication 1868). These two texts 'stand prominently as the threshold to modern meanings of autobiography.' They mark the move of the autobiographical self from the Augustinian self to the modern concept of the self (Goodwin 1993, 8).

In his autobiography, Augustine recounts his pursuit of 'moral, intellectual, and spiritual matters through its author's act of baring the heart, mind, and soul' (Goodwin 1993, 4). The modern concept of self is privileged by individual intrinsic values such as having a unique personality (Goodwin 1993, 8). This movement is a reflection of social changes triggered by the European Enlightenment, whose essential appeal was to liberate individuals from the constraints of the divinity. As argued in the essays in *The Augustinian Tradition* (Matthews 1999), today's Western world remains significantly shaped within the Augustinian tradition. The coherent evolution of individual subjectivity can be traced to Augustine and Rousseau's autobiographies.

Writing in the form of talking to God and by seeing God as his helper, Augustine searches for self-knowledge from his soul rather than from other, outside sources. He writes:

I entered even into mine own inwards, thou being my Leader: and able
I was to do it, for thou wert now become my Helper. Into myself I
went, and with the eyes of my soul (such as it was) I discovered over
the same eye of my soul, over my mind (Augustine 1631, 371).

By seeing the innermost part of himself from the standpoint of God, Augustine gets to know himself. As God is a transcendental existence, by standing in God Augustine gains the transcendental knowledge about his self. This self-knowledge is stable and eternal.

Differing from Augustine, Rousseau steps away from God. He sees 'himself as God himself' (Hartle 1999, 265). He asserts that he has the authority to decide who he is. As illustrated by the opening words for his *Confessions*:

I am resolved on an undertaking that has no model and will have no imitator. I want to show my fellow-men a man in all the truth of nature; and this man is to be myself.

Myself alone. I feel my heart and I know men. I am not made like any that I have seen; I venture to believe that I was not made like any that exist. If I am not more deserving, at least I am different. As to whether nature did well or ill to break the mould in which I was cast, that is something no one can judge until after they have read me (Rousseau 2000, 5).

Rousseau's first-person 'I' overtakes his account in 'the conviction that his unique personality consists in the priority of feeling over reason, the importance of inner truth over worldly success, and the unprecedented endeavor of displaying himself as he actually was' (Goodwin 1993, 9).

It is evident that Rousseau inherits Augustine's innermost searching for self-knowledge but discards Augustine's pure religious pursuit that is proper to God.

Rousseau's interest in his self reflects the stress on Enlightenment individuality. Humankind is viewed as an entity with reason which guides autonomous growth. Reason is prioritised over the divinity. Individuals are privileged as the starting point for self-understanding. These Enlightenment notions directly influenced the shape of individualistic Western societies. The core of individualistic societies is that the individual is viewed as a rational entity developing autonomously. Individuality predominantly represented by unique personality is valued.

For this heritage, Western autobiography is discernible as a particular genre in which the self appears as self-sufficient, unified, and constructed retrospectively. Built on this notion, Western autobiography conventionally represents a tripartite identity of autobiographical being: hero/heroine, narrator, and author. The 'I' is at once hero or heroine, narrator and author (Grant 1990, 312). It is this that gives autobiography its subject and hence determines the content. Similar to Augustine and Rousseau's construction of their life stories, autobiography is structured by the imposition of a unified life upon this retrieval of self which privileges the agency of the 'I' over the course of a determining self (Cutter 1994, 32, 36). Hence, Gusdorf argues that modern Western autobiographers primarily concern themselves with 'the task of reconstructing the unity of a life across time' (Cutter 1994, 37). Thus modern autobiographers are aware of themselves as individual egos. Their work reflects an abiding self-consciousness, and typically displays a concern, if not a preoccupation, with finding the self, or demonstrating the self's ability to transcend or advantageously harness the vicissitudes of life.

One exemplar of Western autobiography is *Bildungsroman*. Dating from the nineteenth century (Boes 2006), *Bildung* (self-cultivation) presupposes the autonomy of the self and the ability to grasp the self 'in the form of absolute self-consciousness'

through reflection, which Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770–1831) called ‘subjectivity’ (Habermas 1998[1987], 16, 18). Hegel views the structure of self-relation as subjectivity:

The principle of the modern world is freedom of subjectivity, the principle that all the essential factors present in the intellectual whole are now coming into their right in the course of their development’ (Hegel 1952, quoted in Habermas 1998[1987], 16).

The ideal of *Bildung* is the state of maturity. In this state, individuals enjoy the freedom of subjectivity (also see Foucault 1997[1984]). In Hegel’s term, it is the ‘right’ of the individual. This right has to develop through a process to reach its ideal—self-assurance:

It then develops itself through the different forms of subjectivity, and at last in absolute right, the state or the complete, concrete objectivity of the will, attains to the personality of the state and its conscious assurance of itself. This final term gives to all particularities a new form by taking them up into its pure self. It ceases to hesitate between reasons *pro* and *con*, and deciding by an ‘I will,’ initiates all action and reality (Hegel 1896, 286–287).

According to Hegel, individual personality serves the core of subjectivity. It embodies the truth of the self only when a person becomes an independent subject, actualising their personality. The truth of existence is that the subject becomes the

monarch of its personality (Hegel 1896, 287–288). ‘A so-called moral person, a society, congregation, or family, be it as concrete as it may, possesses personality only as an element and abstractly’ (Hegel 1896, 287). Therefore, *Bildungsroman* is interpreted as a genre ‘usually autobiographical (and sometimes hardly distinguishable from that of nonfictional form), and principally concerned with the spiritual and psychological development of the protagonist’ (Hardin 1991, ix). The sociologist Wilhelm Dilthey defines *Bildungsroman* as:

the history of a young man ‘who enters into life in a blissful state of ignorance, seeks related souls, experiences friendship and love, struggles with the hard realities of the world and thus armed with a variety of experiences, matures, finds himself and his mission in the world’ (Wilhelm Dilthey 1906, quoted in Hardin 1991, xiv).

A *Bildungsroman* text features the development of self-consciousness of the protagonist who ‘after going out into the world and experiencing both defeats and triumphs, comes to a better understanding of self and to a general affirmative view of the world’ (Hardin 1991, xiii). Since the early twentieth century *Bildungsroman* has been regarded as a genre subsuming all narratives focusing on ‘minute and long-term changes’ of protagonists during the experience of intellectual life (Boes 2006, 231). James Joyce’s *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916) and Thomas Mann’s *The Magic Mountain* (1924) are considered the canonical modernist examples of *Bildungsroman* concerning the self intellectually and psychologically. Since the term *Bildungsroman* made its way into English vocabulary, it has been used as a ‘handy designation of any novel that “has as its main theme the formative years or spiritual

education of one person” (quoted in Boes 2006, 231). Subsequently, the ‘genre was broadened to include coming-of-age narratives’ (Boes 2006, 231), focusing on presenting the development of self-consciousness from childhood to youth, and to adulthood (Egan 1984). Maturing to adult status means attaining awareness of the self as an independent and self-determined subject. Jerome Hamilton Buckley’s *Season of Youth: The Bildungsroman from Dickens to Golding*, published in 1974, is a principal reference. Buckley proposed a broad definition of the genre, stating that a *Bildungsroman* is a novel portraying at least two or three of a set list of characteristics, among them ‘childhood, the conflict of generations, provinciality, the larger society, self-education, alienation, ordeal by love, the search for a vocation and a working philosophy’ (Buckley 1974, 18, quoted in Boes 2006, 231–232). Hence the genre of *Bildungsroman* includes many autobiographical narratives.

It can be concluded that autobiography in its modern form is conventionally concerned with the privileging of egocentric individualism, the historical reconstruction of life in sequential order and the imposed teleological presentation of the progressive development of a rational, coherent, and individualist self. Central to this is the tripartite identity found in the narrative where hero/heroine, narrator, and author are the same individual.

Chinese autobiography: development and conventions

History of Chinese autobiography

Chinese autobiography differs from Western autobiography in its way of perceiving and expressing a collectivistic concept of the self and its thematic canon called *Chunqiu-bifa* (*Chunqiu*-style 春秋笔法). These conventions of Chinese autobiography can be traced to ancient court scribes and their historiographical texts. Books compiled during the period between ca. 770 BC and 221 BC—such as the

Shangshu (*Book of Documents* 尚书), *Chunqiu* (*The Spring and Autumn Annals* 春秋), and *Guoyu* (*Discourses of the States* 国语)³—are among the earliest known historiographical texts. These ancient written sources not only demonstrate that the practice of recording key events and rulers' words at imperial courts started very early but also illustrate that Chinese literature, historiography, and philosophical thought derive from the same root: court scribes' recording events and rulers' words.

This practice of assigning scribes to record events and rulers' words at imperial courts had been institutionalised before these books were completed and before China's first feudal dynasty *Qin* was founded in 221 BC. Two literate officials served at courts recording what significant events happened and what the rulers said. One holding the duty of recording rulers' words was called the 'historian of the left' (*zuoshi* 左史), as he stood on the so-called 'left', and the other on the so-called 'right' was the 'historian of the right' (*youshi* 右史) (Han 1992; Schaberg 2001, 7). Records centred on the rulers. It was from this origin, as many ancient books reveal, that Chinese autobiography was derived (Liu and Zhao 1990, 637). The continuity of Chinese civilisation lasting more than two millennia has bestowed a durable cultural and literary tradition. Emerging from this long tradition, Chinese autobiography has become a peculiar genre and has accumulated a big repertoire of subgenres such as autobiography in the guise of biography or historiographical document. As Liang Qichao argued, many ancient texts are in fact self-evidently autobiographies despite their ostensible appearance and 'autobiography had already been advanced in the

³ These three ancient books are among the earliest historiographical and literary texts in China. They were all compiled before the year 221 BC. Their compilers are unknown. *Book of Documents* is the first collection of speeches of the legendary tribe leaders (ca. 26th century BC–21st century BC) and the kings of the Xia, Shang, and Zhou dynasties (ca. 21st century–256 BC). *The Spring and Autumn Annals* is a historiographical text chronicling main events that occurred in the State of Lu during each year in a 241-year period from 722 BC to 481 BC. A spring and autumn indicates a year. *Discourses of the States* is a collection of speeches attributed to rulers and other men from the Spring and Autumn period (770 BC–476 BC).

ancient time in China' (Liang 1998[1933], 210–211). Guo Dengfeng's 郭登峰 *Lidai zixuzhuan wenchao* (*Self-Narratives and Autobiographies Throughout the Ages* 历代自叙传文钞 (1965[1937])) is a brilliant collection of autobiographical texts of ancient China. Zhu Dongrun's 朱东润 (1896–1988) *Badai zhuanxu wenxue shulun* (*Discussions on Biographical Narrative Literature in Eight Dynasties* 八代传叙文学述论, 2006[1942]) is a positive echo to Liang Qichao's argument. In *The Confucian's Progress: Autobiographical Writings in Traditional China*, Pei-yi Wu argues that the period between 1565 and 1680 was the 'golden age of Chinese autobiography' (Wu 1990, xii).⁴

The first time that Chinese autobiography was significantly influenced by Western autobiography was the early twentieth century through the 1920s New Cultural Movement.⁵ Western autobiography was introduced to Chinese writers as a tool to reform traditional culture through reforming literature. It was believed that

⁴ The key contributions to ancient Chinese autobiographical studies include Kozo Kawai 川合康三. 1999. *Zhongguo de zizhuan wenxue* (*China's Autobiographic Literature* 中国的自传文学) Beijing 北京: Zhongyang bianyi chubanshe (Central Compilation & Translation Press 中央编译出版社); Han Zhaoqi 韩兆琦. 1992. *Zhongguo zhuanji wenxueshi* (*The History of Chinese Biographical Literature* 中国传记文学史) Shijiazhuang 石家庄: Hebei jiaoyu chubanshe 河北教育出版社; Li Xiangnian 李详年. 1995. *Hanwei liuchao zhuanji wenxue shigao* (*The History of Biographical Literature of the Han-Wei-and-Six-Dynasties Period* 汉魏六朝传记文学史稿) Shanghai 上海: Fudan daxue chubanshe 复旦大学出版社; Zhang Xinke 张新科. 2000. *Tangqian shizhuan wenxue yanjiu* (*Studies on Historical-Biographical Literature before the Tang Dynasty* 唐前史传文学研究) Xi'an 西安: Xibei daxue chubanshe 西北大学出版社; Guo Yingde 郭英德. 2005. 'A Brief Comment on Autobiographical Writings of the Ming Dynasty 明人自传文论略.' *Journal of School Chinese Language and Culture Nanjing Normal University* 南京师范大学人文学院学报. 109–18.

⁵ The New Cultural Movement occurred in the 1910s and 1920s in China. Its aim was to strengthen China. The intellectuals educated abroad advocated breaking through the restrictions of the Confucian tradition and learning from the West so as to promote science, democracy, and the emancipation of women. In literature, they encouraged using Vernacular Chinese and the introduction of Western thoughts and techniques in literary creation, including Western autobiography. Western-style autobiography was introduced into China and practised by advocates such as Hu Shi (1891–1962) and Yu Dafu (1896–1945). For the New Cultural Movement, see Goldman, Merle (ed.) 1977. *Modern Chinese Literature in the May Fourth Era*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. Gu Yeping 辜也平. 2004. 'Xixue dongjian yu zhongguo xiandai chuanji wenxue guannian de dansheng' (Introduction to Western Thoughts and Birth of China's Modern Biography Writing Concept 西学东渐与中国现代传记文学观念的诞生). *Zhongguo bijiao wenxue* (*Comparative Literature in China* 中国比较文学) 57.95-105. Chen Pingyuan 陈平原. 2005. *Chumo lishi yu jinru wusi* (*Touches of History: An Entry into 'May Fourth' China* 触摸历史与进入五四) Beijing 北京: Peking University Press 北京大学出版社. For the development of Chinese auto/biography, see Chen Wanxiong 陈万雄 1997b. *Wusi xin wenhua de yuanliu* (*The Origin of the May 4th New Cultural Movement* 五四新文化的源流) Beijing 北京: Joint Publishing 三联书店).

reform, even ‘revolution’ in literature ‘would most effectively usher in a new culture’ (Tang 1993, 5). However, this attempt failed to achieve substantial success. Yu Dafu and Hu Shi were two leading writers advocating innovations to Chinese autobiography by following the conventions of modern Western autobiographical writing. Yu elaborated his narrative to assert the self like a modern Western individual, focusing on the descriptions of self-formation and private life (Chen 2003, 565–567). Hu Shi consciously learned from Western autobiographical writing, but in the end he had to admit that unconsciously he returned to the Chinese way (Hu 1993[1933], 4). As Yu Dafu and Hu Shi’s cases indicate, modern Western autobiographical writing failed to prevail in China and defeat the strong influence of Chinese cultural and literary tradition on this literary form. Nevertheless, today’s Chinese autobiographical writing has changed significantly from ancient writings and also from the modern writings of Yu Dafu and Hu Shi. However, contemporary Chinese autobiography is still significantly influenced by Chinese cultural and literary legacies. As exemplified by the contemporary writer Zhang Haidi’s 张海迪 (1955–) life stories, the sort of individual subjectivity which is the focus of Western autobiography has not yet become the focus of contemporary Chinese autobiography (Bauer 1964; Dryburgh and Dauncey 2013; Hegel and Hessney 1985; Kozo 1999; Larson 1991; Ng 2003; Taylor 1978; Wells 2003; 2009; Wu 1990). The unique writing style and portrayal of the self formed in Chinese cultural and literary traditions endures.

***Chunqiu*-style and the Chinese self**

From ancient historiographical autobiographical texts to contemporary autobiographical accounts, Chinese autobiography has evolved greatly in respect to textual form and linguistic expression. More recently it has also been inevitably

exposed to the growing influence of Western culture. Despite this, certain distinctiveness remains apparent: Chinese autobiography expresses a collectivistic concept of self and observes a thematic canon called *Chunqiu*-style. The *Chunqiu*-style was named after the book *The Spring and Autumn Annals* (completed before 221 B.C). As mentioned above, Chinese autobiography originated from recording main events of a state and rulers' words at imperial courts. This origin determined the two essential aspects for the development of autobiographical writing. One is the intention of the autobiographical act, which is related to what to write and how. The other is the self-understanding of the person who writes an autobiography.

The first aspect is embodied in *Chunqiu*-style which has four implications. The first implication is the stress on facticity. The original intention of recording rulers' utterances and events at courts was to provide future rulers with a reference for governance. Conquering and being conquered happened between states so frequently in ancient times that state security was vulnerable. Experiences and lessons from precedent rulers was thought to be a useful means for enhancing statecraft. Hence the accuracy of records was crucial. It had much to do with the prosperity and decline of a state (Liu and Zhao 1990, 304). The stress on facticity became a central feature of Chinese life-writing. As a consequence, in Chinese narrative the self is often expressed through depictions of the outside material world and the recording of speeches rather than examinations of one's interiority.

The second implication of the *Chunqiu*-style is its succinctness and pertinence to its referential/didactic function. Confined by the primitive material conditions of ancient times (e.g., stone, bronze, wood or bamboo slips were used as carriers of written texts), *Chunqiu*-style was gradually formulated to meet both ends of didactic significance, and 'narrative economy' as termed by Wu (1990, 12).

Chunqiu-style is ‘a prose style succinct, compact, terse, highly selective in what it could represent or express’ (Wu 1990, 12). This implication, however, is only partially observed today. The material conditions necessitating succinctness no longer exist. But pertinence to didactic signification remains valued in Chinese literature, which is expounded as the third implication.

The third implication of the *Chunqiu*-style is the didactic function. This means that a text should convey Chinese ethics, which are primarily Confucian and Daoist values. This implication constitutes the endurable essence of *Chunqiu*-style. The Confucian master Zuo Qiuming 左丘明 (ca. 556 BC–ca. 451 BC) defined *Chunqiu*-style the following way:

The *Chunqiu*’s references are subtle yet radiantly clear; they record facts but do so darkly; they express indirectly yet form complete patterns; they are exhaustive but never excessive; and they punish evil and encourage good.

《春秋》之称，微而显，志而晦，婉而成章，尽而不汙，惩恶而劝善。

(Schaberge 2001, 265)

Zuo’s definition articulates the thematic value of the *Chunqiu*-style: ‘punishing evil and encouraging good.’ Good writing complies with Chinese ethics. The requirement that ‘text should convey Chinese ethics’ has been jargonised into a Chinese idiom:

‘writing to convey the *Dao*’ (文以载道). The notion of ‘*Dao*’ is abstract to such an extent that it can be dynamically interpreted in different contexts. It can be a universal law underlying all phenomena. Within this dynamism, however, literature’s role is to convey a sense of Chinese ethics.

Chunqiu-style for conveying the *Dao* is valued in Chinese literary criticism. Critiques supporting *Chunqiu*-style are found in critical works on literature and historiography spanning the fifth century to the contemporary era, such as the following: Liu Xie's 刘勰 (ca. 465–520) *Wenxin diaolong* (*The Literary Mind and the Carving Dragon* 文心雕龙) (ca. 501–502); Liu Zhiji's 刘知几 (661–721) *Shi tong* (*Generality of Historiography* 史通) (ca. 660); Zhang Xuecheng's 章学诚 (1738–1801) *Wenshi tongyi* (*General Discussions on Literature and Historiography* 文史通义) (1833); Liang Qichao's 梁启超 (1873–1929) series of essays on historiography and literature (Liang 1998[1933]; 1999); Chen Lancun 陈兰村 and Zhang Xinke 张新科's *Zhongguo gudian zhuanji lungao* (*Discussions on Chinese Classic Biographies* 中国古典传记论稿) (1991); and Han Zhaoqi's 韩兆琦 *Zhongguo zhuanji wenxueshi* (*The History of Chinese Biographical Literature* 中国传记文学史) (1992).

Specific to Chinese autobiography, *Chunqiu*-style is reflected in the way that there is no intention of chronicling ‘all that happened to him [the author], all that he did, thought, and felt’ to show the formation of personhood as Rousseau did in his *Confessions* (Hartle 1999, 265). The observation of ‘conveying the *Dao*’ means to select those life experiences that can illuminate the ‘*Dao*’—Confucian ethics, such as selflessness, self-sacrifice to public interests, righteousness, and loyalty to the state aiming to benefit communal harmony, or Daoist pursuits, such as consciously expelling material desires and being contenting living a simple life in nature aiming to promote harmony in nature (Hegel 1985, 8). This literary intention requires that authors construct a life that illustrates values beneficial to public interests rather than to articulating individual subjectivity as found in much Western autobiography.

Chinese autobiography expresses a collectivistic concept of the self. This collectivistic concept of the self traces its legacy back to ancient historiographical recordings at imperial courts, as in *Chunqiu*-style. The strong sense of scribal duty and responsibility for state welfare penetrates literary performance and self-identification. As Yu Yingshi 余英时, a specialist in Chinese culture argues, these literate people were the backbone of Chinese culture. They constituted, inherited, and innovated Chinese culture all along Chinese history (Yu 1987). It was from these literate people's self-identifications that a collectivistic concept of the self formed.

Of course, the sense of the collectivistic self in contemporary contexts is not the same as that sensed by ancient scribes whose self-sense was directly linked to the fate of the state. It is now specifically explained within a hierarchical construct which is structured from the bottom to the top by individual, family, clan, community, nation, society, and nature (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, and Wetherell 1987). Chinese individuals perceive themselves as existing in relation to this interconnected hierarchical system. Due to the distinctive and ultimate concern of Confucianism and Daoism, the Chinese concept of self can be recognised as showing an inclination either to Confucianism or Daoism, or both. Identified with Confucianism, the concept of the self is expressed with reference to social relations. Individuals are identified according to their positions in society. And each position signifies a particular role that is performed to benefit the welfare of society. For example, a Chinese individual may identify him/herself with his or her kinship family and social work. Identified with Daoism, the concept of the self is expressed in relation to nature. Nature in Daoism is firstly theoretically understood as an autonomous and spontaneous organic system. Human beings should curb their excessive material desires and instead strive to live in harmony within nature. The self-restraint

develops the notion of *wu wei* ('non-doing' 无为). It means doing nothing against nature. As argued by Fung Yu-lan, a philosopher specialising in Chinese thought, 'what is of nature is the source of human happiness and what is of man is the root of all human suffering' (Fung 1948, 20). The notion of non-doing has become an attitude adopted in interpreting the vicissitudes of life and suffering. In fact, living a mundane life, the Daoist sense of the self is integral to but submissive to an overarching and overt Confucian sense of the self. As Fung argues, the Chinese concept of the self is basically the Confucian concept, and the Daoist concept serves more as the alternative to the Confucian self-sense when frustration or adversity falls upon the person (Fung 1948, 7). Both Confucius and Mencius expressed Daoist thought in the face of vicissitudes during the course of pursuing Confucian achievements. Confucius stated: 'My doctrines make no way. I will get upon a raft, and float about on the sea' (Confucius 1971[ca. 8th–3rd century BC], 174). His words can be translated as 'if the court is not in favour of my advocacy, I will retreat from the court and political life to be content with a leisurely life drifting on the sea freely.' Serving the court is the representation of the Confucian self, while being content with life in nature is the action of Daoist non-doing. Mencius argued that the appropriateness of 'literate' individuals should be: 'If poor [in political adversity], they attended to their own virtue in solitude; if advanced to dignity, they made the whole kingdom virtuous as well' (Mencius 19--?[ca. 300 BC], 453). Mencius advocated the tact of non-doing—withdrawing from the disagreeable state to pursue intellectual development so as to spend his time serving the court again. The implied optimistic view complies with the Daoist naturalistic thought that the good and bad alternatively dominate. According to Fung, Confucianism and Daoism constitute a synthesis of two antitheses in Chinese people's minds (Fung 1948, 8). Charles

Hucker, a professor of Chinese culture, jocularly portrayed the character of the Chinese in the following way:

The eventual merging of the antithetical reformist and escapist strains in the Chinese character has given it admirable poise and resiliency, contributing to the remarkable national endurance or staying power that has served China so well throughout its history. In times of crisis or disaster, while the Confucian part of every Chinese is soberly thinking, This is awful! We'd better do something!, his Taoist part is happily thinking, Such is life! Isn't it marvellous! (Hucker 1975, 91–92).

Hucker's interesting painting of the Chinese reveals that the Chinese self is identified in correspondence with outside changes. In other words, the Chinese perceive themselves in the context of the external world rather than within the self. The orientation of self-understanding is towards self-values beneficial to the public interest. One's self-value is defined in accordance with one's social position-role. Thus, a Chinese person gains their sense of the self through reference to the external world. Confucian and Daoist traditions have rewarded the Chinese with an elastic philosophy in dealing with the vicissitudes of life. In Hucker's words, the Chinese character has 'admirable poise and resiliency' in times of 'crisis or disaster' (Hucker 1975, 92). It might be apposite to use 'Chineseness' to encapsulate these uniquenesses that are embedded in the concept of the Chinese self. Such 'Chineseness' is stereotypically demonstrated by two ancient writers Sima Qian 司馬

迁 (ca. 145 BC or 135 BC–86 BC) and Tao Qian 陶潜 (365–427 BC). Their autobiographical texts are discussed in the following section.

Traditions of Chinese autobiographical expression after suffering

Examinations of the Chinese self presented in ancient, modern, and contemporary autobiographical texts demonstrate the inheritance of ‘Chineseness’ throughout Chinese literary history. According to Wolfgang Bauer, the earliest autobiographical text was written by Qu Yuan (ca. 340 BC–ca. 278 BC), whose self-expression demonstrates the original sense of ‘Chineseness’ (Bauer 1964). Kozo Kawai examined the self-expressions of ancient autobiographical texts produced from the time of the Han dynasty to the Song dynasty (approximately from the year 206 BC to 1127 AD) and finds the origin in Qu Yuan’s text, but Sima Qian’s ‘Taishigong zixu’ (‘A Postface Written by the Grand Scribe Himself’ 太史公自序) included as the final (130th) chapter of the *Shiji* (written between ca. 109 BC and 91 BC) is the earliest autobiography available today (Kozo 1999, 12). Rodney L Taylor and Pei-yi Wu’s studies focus on texts from the period 1565 to 1680 AD (Taylor 1978; Wu 1990). Both find that autobiographies in this era express the Confucian concept of the self, though it is a neo-Confucian self in Taylor’s sense and a progressive Confucian self in Wu’s sense. Wendy Larson looks at more modern self-narratives and contributes *Literary Authority and the Modern Chinese Writer* (Larson 1991). Janet Ng’s *The Experience of Modernity: Chinese Autobiography of the Early Twentieth Century* (Ng 2003) is another contribution to the study of modern Chinese autobiography. *Expressions of Self in Chinese Literature* (Hegel and Hessney 1985) collects the essays on the Chinese self ‘from a wide variety of individual works of all the main literary forms from the earliest to the present’ (Hegel 1985, 4). Another edited book *Writing Lives in China, 1600–2010: Histories of the Elusive Self* (Dryburgh and

Dauncey 2013), as the title suggests, provides some insights into the texts spanning from the seventeenth century to this decade. All these scholarly efforts provide both a general and specific description of the self expressed in Chinese autobiographies. Although some changes are inevitable and evident across this long time span, ‘Chineseness’ that can be traced to the origin of the Chinese literary tradition retains its core position in the Chinese self-perception and self-expression.

Given various concerns over how to define autobiography, there is no agreement on which can be defined as the first Chinese autobiography (see for example Zhu 2006[1942], 25). However, scholars agree that Sima Qian’s ‘Taishigong zixu’ (‘A Postface Written by the Grand Scribe Himself’ 太史公自序) included as the final (130th) chapter of the *Shiji* (ca. during 109 BC to 91 BC), and Tao Qian’s *Wuliu xiansheng zhuan* (*Biography of Master Five Willows* 五柳先生传) (ca. 397) are among early influential pioneers of Chinese autobiography (see for example Chen 1999; Han 1992; Kozo 1999; Larson 1991; Yang 1994; Yang and Zhao 2005; Zhao 2003). These two texts were constantly emulated in ancient times.

Both Sima and Tao had many followers and innovators. For example, Wang Chong 王充 (27–97), Ban Gu 班固 (32–92), Cao Pi 曹丕 (187–226), Li Qingzhao 李清照 (1084–1155), Wen Tianxiang 文天祥 (1236–1283), Ai Nanying 艾南英 (1583–1646) followed Sima to include personal accounts in prefaces or postfaces to their works. These examples show the endurance of this pattern in the Chinese literary tradition. Although some minor changes (for example, distant ancestors were no longer stressed as in the work of Sima) (see for example Guo 2005, 110), autobiography in the guise of a book’s preface became a subgenre of autobiography categorised as *Xuzhuan* (autobiography in preface 序传) (Liu and Zhao 1990, 555–567).

Tao's style of third-person account also became a model of how to represent the self. The immediate testimony is that the title *Wuliu xiansheng zhuan* 五柳先生传⁶ was formulaically followed, for example: Wang Ji's 王绩 (ca. 590–644) *Wudou xiansheng zhuan* 五斗先生传; Bai Juyi's 白居易 (772–846) *Zuiyin xiansheng zhuan* 醉吟先生传; Lu Guimeng's 陆龟蒙 (?–882) *Puli xiansheng zhuan* 甫里先生传; Ouyang Xiu's 欧阳修 (1007–1072) *Liuyi jushi zhuan* 六一居士传; Song Lian's 宋濂 (1310–1381) *Bainiusheng zhuan* 白牛生传; Zheng Shanfu's 郑善夫 (1485–1523) *Shaoguzi zhuan* 少谷子传; and Hu Yinlin's 胡应麟 (1551–1602) *Shiyangsheng zhuan* 石羊生传. These texts constitutes another subgenre of Chinese autobiography categorised as *zhuan* 传.⁶

These two styles of autobiography initiated by Sima and Tao endured until China entered the modern era at the end of the nineteenth century. Sima and Tao are the representatives who expressed the Confucian self and the Daoist self respectively, which are the primary constituents of the Chinese self in the mundane life. Wendy Larson argues that Sima and Tao respectively represent two prototypes of Chinese autobiography, which can be considered as the two ends of a continuum of Chinese self-expression. Sima began his self-introduction from his ancestral fathers who all once held the position of 'Grand Scribe' at courts. Then he moved his account to his father, who passed on his post of 'Grand Scribe' to Sima on his deathbed and made Sima promise to take the commitment of writing 'a comprehensive history of China, starting from the earliest reliable records and continuing down to contemporary times' (Nienhauser 2011, 464). After Sima recounted information on his father's life, he compiled and reviewed historiographical and philosophical schools and introduced

⁶ In traditional Chinese literature, *zhuan* means 'passing on.' In this thesis, it is equivalent to 'biography' in terms of a personal account.

his book *Shiji*. ‘Letter to Jen An (Shao-ch’ing)’ was Sima’s letter to his friend Jen An (Ren An in *pinyin*, also named Shao-ch’ing) (Sima 1965[ca.93 BC]). In this letter he recounted all that he suffered and his grand intellectual pursuit, which provides complementary information on Sima’s life.

Sima was unfortunately involved in a court conflict and received a harsh and humiliating punishment: castration. But his promise to his father and his own academic pursuit made him determined to learn from previous masters King Wen, Confucius, Zuo Qiu, and Sun Zi who had all put their thoughts into books. In this way, they were remembered and became eternal—they died, but their teachings did not. Zuo Qiu and Sun Zi served as exemplars. Sima wrote that Zuo Qiu ‘lost his sight and so we have the *Conversations from the States*; Sun Tzu[Zi] had his feet chopped off, and *The Art of War* was put together’ (Sima 1965[ca.93 BC], 101). With reference to their tragedies and their achievements, Sima thought that he should ignore the spiritual humiliation and physical injury caused by castration and devote his heart and soul to his book to establish his own school of thought. He stated:

I have brought together the scattered fragments of ancient lore. I studied the events of history and set them down in significant order; I have written 130 chapters in which appears the record of the past—its periods of greatness and decline, of achievement and failure. Further it was my hope, by a thorough comprehension of the workings of affairs divine and human, and a knowledge of the historical process, to create a philosophy of my own (Sima 1965[ca.93 BC], 101).

Sima's recounting from family information to intellectual pursuit and his tragedy demonstrates an undeniable concept of the Confucian self. The references that he retrieved for his self-identity include his family origin, hereditary post and duty of 'Grand Scribe,' and intellectual pursuit. For this reason, Wendy Larson categorises Sima's autobiography as a 'circumstantial text,' and Sima expressed a 'circumstantial self,' in which 'the socio-material world of kinship, ancestry, "real" time and place, proper names, and official position' constitute the 'context of referentiality' (Larson 1991, 3). In contrast, at the other end of the continuum of Chinese autobiography is Tao's text *Wuliu xiansheng zhuan* which represents the other prototype of Chinese autobiography: the 'impressionistic' autobiography as Larson categorises. In this text, 'kinship, "real" name and place, proper name, and official position' are suppressed and substituted by 'reference to aspects of the life of a detached literatus' (Larson 1991, 3).

In his text, Tao portrays himself as a recluse in the third person. He follows the same narrative pattern as Sima, beginning with personal information such as name, family origin, and birthplace. But Tao intentionally provides no substantial detail. He jocularly writes that nobody knows who he is and where he is from so that people give him the sobriquet 'Master Five Willows,' as there are five willows by his house (Kozo 1999, 56). And then he describes his life. He shows no interest in the affairs of social and political life. He lives a contented simple life. He does not particularly strive for official rank, wealth, good reputation, and glory for family and clan or other issues that a literate person is normally concerned with. He loves books, poetry, and wine. Literary activity and wine are his life's content. Notwithstanding these hobbies, he does not make extra effort to satisfy them. He depicts himself as a person who loves reading, but never seeks deep explorations of extraneous meanings;

he is fond of wine, but does not bother to earn money to buy it. However, if there is a chance that he is invited to have a drink, he drinks to his content. He cares for nothing. He is poor to the extent that his gown is shabby, and house dilapidated. But it does not affect anything. Writing poetry to amuse himself is enough.

According to Larson, the references that Tao retrieved for his self-identification are not so 'real' vis-a-vis his actual life, therefore, his work is 'impressionistic.' It might be true, but it is not the point. The point is that Tao expressed a Daoist self. From the perspective of means for self-identification, Sima and Tao share initially a similar way of perceiving the self. Both identified themselves with the outside material world. The difference is that Sima identified himself with social affairs while Tao identified himself with nature. Tao adopted the typical attitude and action of Daoism: non-doing. He intentionally distanced himself from family links, which is demonstrated by his following the narrative pattern regarding self-introduction but providing scant information. He contented himself with poetry and wine. His behaviours were indolent, natural, and spontaneous, showing no constraints from society or any awareness of social responsibility supposed to be the normality presented by Chinese literates in ancient China. If we knew that Tao's text was composed after he resigned from his post in which he was unhappy, we would get a better understanding of his Daoist-influenced self-expression.

He was born into a 'once-illustrious' family. When Tao was born, his family had lost most of its political and military influence but it was still considered a prominent noble family. During his lifetime, Tao served in several official posts but never rose to any high position. He was not happy in his posts. In 405 AD, he resigned and retired to his home living in quiet reclusion (Tian 2005, 5–6). Tao's

action is the realisation of Confucius and Mencius's challenge: serve an enlightenment government or retire to observe the self. As Li Chi, a Chinese literary critic argues, reclusion was a tactic of surviving the moment of frustration. Withdrawal from the treacherous political vortex not only helped them escape the hazard of losing their lives, but it also made it possible to protect their spiritual life (Li 1962/1963, 236). Reclusion was a 'gesture of nonconformity and defiance' (Li 1962/1963, 238).

Sima and Tao's texts show clearly that Sima expressed a Confucian self while Tao expressed a Daoist self. The Confucian self concentrates on Confucian pursuits. Like Sima, despite the humiliation, the Confucian part of his self persisted in fulfilling the obligation of his post of Grand Scribe. The Daoist self retreats from politics to find enjoyment in nature, daily life, or spiritual pursuit, presenting Daoist philosophy (Qian 2001[1988], 139–140). Nevertheless, Sima and Tao's selves are not pure in their respective sense. Beneath Sima's Confucian self-expression is his Daoist self, while beneath Tao's Daoist self-expression is his Confucian self. Both wrote about their selves after they experienced frustrations in political life. What saved Sima from breaking under humiliation and persecution was the Daoist view on life. As Hucker jocularly states, the Daoist part of the Chinese self would say 'Such is life!' (Hucker 1975, 91–92). This made it possible for Sima to find models from past history and imagine himself in the forever future. Within this endless temporal scale Sima found his life meaning and self-meaning. His duty of being a Grand Scribe provided him with the foundations of his self. Identifying the self with grand history is Daoist, which harbours beneath Sima's overt Confucian self-expression.

Tao's overt Daoist self-expression conceals his Confucian self. His pioneering self-portrayal is the testimony. As Li argues, as early as the time of

Confucius, the concept of the recluse had come to refer to a person ‘who kept himself apart from the world of affairs and yet was anxious to make himself heard’ (Li 1962/1963, 237). Tao did not seek utter seclusion, for he sought engagement with the wider world through his writing. Lu Xun (1881–1936), the notable writer and critic of modern Chinese literature argued that Tao was not a thorough recluse of Daoist ‘non-doing,’ although he eschewed material desire and ambitions in political life. Lu quoted Mozi (ca. 468 B.C–ca.376 BC) and Yangzi’s (years unknown) acts to illustrate Daoist ‘non-doing’ and Confucian ‘doing.’ Mozi authored a book explaining his thoughts and hence he is remembered while Yangzi left nothing, so he is mostly forgotten (Lu 2005[1927], 537–539).

Mozi and Yangzi (also named Yang Zhu) were equally influential thinkers during the Spring and Autumn period (ca. 770 BC–ca. 476 BC). Mencius stated, ‘The words of Yang Choo[Zhu] and Mih Teih[Mo Zhai] fill the empire. If you listen to people’s discourses throughout it, you will find that they have adopted the views either of Yang or of Mih 杨朱, 墨翟之言盈天下, 天下之言, 不归于杨, 即归墨.’ (Mencius 19--?[ca. 300 BC], 677–678). However, Mozi’s ‘doing’—writing a book—established his own school of thought, the School of Mo, while Yangzi adopted ‘non-doing’ and thereby was only discovered through the works of Mencius. Although Tao spent the rest of his life in quiet seclusion, he kept contact with his local and court official friends, drinking and exchanging poetry with them. His poetry and prose ‘were known to his contemporaries, and after his death his works continued to circulate’ (Tian 2005, 6; also see Fu, Jiang and Liu 2005, 383–389).

Therefore, the fundamental distinction between the ‘circumstantial’ and the ‘impressionistic’ autobiographical text is the propensity to articulate the self toward Confucianism or Daoism. No matter which school is dominant, the concept

of the Chinese self is synthetic and represents the components of 'Chineseness.' The Chinese self is identified with the outside material world. Articulating an identification with the social system portrays a Confucian self, and with the system of nature portrays a Daoist self. Both kinds of selves are oriented to the significance of the self to the good of the people. They are collectivistic and holistic concepts. With this 'Chineseness,' Chinese autobiography does not present a tripartite identity of hero/heroine, narrator, and author as Western autobiography does. It is this tripartite identity that gives Western autobiography its subject and that determines its content. Chinese autobiography differs from Western autobiography in that subject and content are directed more outwards than inwards. Its purpose is not to construct a sense of a unified self over time, but rather to situate the self within a broader sociocultural and sociopolitical context. The tripartite identity associated with Western autobiography is dispersed through attention to these broader concerns in Chinese life-writing, which is more influenced by Confucian and Daoist philosophy than Christian and Enlightenment values, which promote the primacy of the individual.

Chapter Two

Chinese intellectuals' self-narratives in the West

The autobiographies constituting the body of 'literature of the wounded' that appeared during the 1980s and 1990s in the West is categorised into two clusters here, given their difference in content. This difference is largely due to the big gap between these two respective age cohorts. They were born and educated in different eras and thereby had different experiences during the first thirty years of the PRC. According to an official document issued by the CPC in 1980, people who are engaged in cerebral work are socially categorised as 'intellectuals.' They are professors, scientists, engineers, writers, teachers, and technicians in factories as well as other cerebral workers with professional knowledge (Luo 1980, 20). Before the Cultural Revolution started in 1966, authors like Ningkun Wu and Nien Cheng were socially labelled as 'intellectuals.' Ningkun Wu was a university lecturer. Nien Cheng was the Chinese assistant providing consultancy regarding Chinese affairs to the British general manager of the Shanghai branch of Shell International Petroleum Company (Cheng 1995[1986], 4). Their life-writings in this thesis are termed as 'intellectuals' texts.' Texts in the other cluster are called 'the Cultural Revolution generation's texts.' These authors were born around the foundation of the PRC in 1949 and spent their adolescent years during the decade of the Cultural Revolution, 1966–1976. This chapter focuses on 'intellectuals' texts,' and the following four chapters discuss the Cultural Revolution generation's texts.

Besides Ningkun Wu's *A Single Tear* and Nien Cheng's *Life and Death in Shanghai*, there are other Chinese intellectuals' life-writings explicitly or implicitly labelled as autobiography such as Yan Jiaqi's *Towards a Democratic China: The*

Intellectual Autobiography of Yan Jiaqi (1992); Harry Wu and Carolyn Wakeman's *Bitter Winds: A Memoir of My Years in China's Gulag* (1994); Liu Zongren's *Hard Time: Thirty Months in a Chinese Labor Camp* (1995), and Yang Xiguang and Susan McFadden's *Captive Spirits: Prisoners of the Cultural Revolution* (1997). These four texts are not considered in this thesis. Yan Jiaqi's text, though claimed as an autobiography, is not a straightforward autobiographical account. His personal story takes up twenty chapters followed by twelve chapters consisting of his essays on the CPC political system and interviews with him. He shows an intense urge to articulate his views on concrete political problems rather than his personal life. Harry Wu's *Bitter Winds* is the product of 'the interweaving of oral history and biography,' as explained by the co-author Carolyn Wakeman. Moreover, the co-author played a significant role in transcribing and translating Harry Wu's story. She reproduced the flavour conveyed by Harry Wu's oral narration, for which she states: 'Much of the language is necessarily my own' (Wu and Wakeman 1994, viii). Liu's *Hard Time* is perhaps a novel rather than an autobiography. Nowhere is it claimed that the story of the named Huang Longsen is Liu Zongren's own story. Additionally, his text has received scant critical attention, and attracted very limited comment on popular Internet sites. For this reason, it is not discussed. Yang Xiguang's text focuses on the lives of the authors' cellmates rather than his own life (Yang 1997, xx). As Ningkun Wu and Nien Cheng's texts are bestsellers in the West, they are considered in detail.

A brief view of *A Single Tear* and *Life and Death in Shanghai*

A Single Tear is Ningkun Wu's chronicle of his thirty-year life experience from 1951 to 1980 in China. Wu was born in 1920 and educated in China. In 1943, he served as an interpreter for Chinese aviators who were on US army air bases for training. After the translation work was completed, he became a student in the English literature

major at Manchester College in Indiana, and later at the University of Chicago. In 1951, he accepted an English teaching position at Yenching University (now Peking University) in Beijing. He therefore ceased his doctorate and returned to China. Like other returning intellectuals from overseas, he was welcomed as a patriotic intellectual. Shortly after his return, a ‘thought reform’ campaign was launched in which intellectuals were the first targets. Ningkun Wu was criticised for contaminating students’ thought using bourgeois literature, and for his inactive and indifferent attitude towards political activities. In 1958, he was branded a ‘rightist’ and forced to reform his thought through forced labour. At first, the work site was a detention centre located in Beijing. Shortly afterwards he was transferred to a remote farm in the harshly cold wilderness in northern China. Two years later in 1960 he was transferred back to the state farm in Beijing. In 1961, he was allowed to go home for medical treatment. In the following years before he was rehabilitated in 1978, his experiences were not much different from the majority of intellectuals at that time, working, and ‘being re-educated’ by peasants in the countryside. After being rehabilitated, his teaching position in Beijing was resumed. He went to the US to join his wife Li Yikai and their three children in 1985. He visited the UK in 1986, where he published his autobiographical essay ‘From Half-Step Bridge to Cambridge.’ In 1990, under the auspices of his alma mater, Manchester College, he went to the US to complete his autobiography. In 1993, his English-language autobiographical book entitled *A Single Tear* was published in the US, Canada, and the UK. Four of the sixteen chapters were narrated by Li Yikai about their family’s life while Ningkun Wu was sent away for ‘thought reform.’

Nien Cheng’s *Life and Death in Shanghai* is the account of her experience during the period 1966 to 1980 in China. Her ordeals began in 1966 when the

Cultural Revolution started. Accused of being a British spy, she was imprisoned in solitary confinement for six-and-a-half years. Despite physical torture, psychological inducements, and intimidation, she refused to make a false confession. She was granted an ‘early’ release in 1973 because a physical ailment was misdiagnosed as cancer. Only then did she learn that her only child was persecuted to death in 1967 by radical Red Guards. She spent the remaining years of the 1970s seeking justice for her daughter. At the same time, she made plans to migrate to the US. Cheng’s wrongful accusation of being a spy was cleared, and she was rehabilitated in 1978. In 1980 she was allowed to leave China for the US. When she arrived in the US, she was denied residency unless she applied for political asylum. She refused to do so. She therefore travelled to Canada and remained there until three years later, in 1983, the US granted her permanent residency. Encouraged by her American friends, she wrote her autobiography in English recounting her sufferings during the Cultural Revolution. The book was published in 1986 and soon became a bestseller. In 1988 she took out US citizenship. She spent the rest of her time in the US without ever returning to China. She died in 2009 at the age of ninety-four.

Ningkun Wu and Nien Cheng recounted different tragic stories about their lives in the PRC. Both ascribed their sufferings to the CPC’s campaign of transforming intellectuals’ way of thinking: ‘thought reform.’ Before reading their accounts, it is necessary to know the background of Chinese intellectuals and ‘thought reform.’

Chinese intellectuals and the ‘thought reform’ campaign of the PRC

The prevalent understanding of the CPC’s ‘thought reform’ is the control of people’s freedom of thought. But its concrete implementations and outcomes were confined by social, cultural, and historical conditions. The ‘thought reform’ campaign that the

CPC launched in the Maoist era was shaped by Chinese historical, political, and cultural traditions and the CPC's ideology. For example, in China cerebral workers are titled 'intellectuals,' which sounds the same as 'intellectuals' in Western societies. But they are not equal in terms of self-understanding and social cognition. Chinese intellectuals are heavily influenced by the traditions of ancient literate people, called *Shi* 士. The appearance of the *Shi* people is a unique cultural phenomenon of Chinese civilisation. Its deep roots and unbroken inheritance implant qualities into Chinese intellectuals, and these qualities are what in part distinguish Chinese from Western intellectuals.

Chinese intellectuals and ancient *Shi* people

'Intellectual' is an imported term from the West to refer to Chinese literate people in the 1920s New Cultural Movement. The Western concept of 'intellectual' originated from ancient Greek philosophers and evolved within the Enlightenment struggle with the divinity. While the Chinese 'intellectual' has evolved from the ancient *Shi* people, the *Shi* people's legacies are still evident. According to Yu Yingshi, the tradition of the *Shi* has endured for at least two thousand five hundred years from Confucius's era (Yu 1987). The term 'intellectual' in the Chinese context has connotations exclusive to Chinese culture. Although Chinese intellectuals are similar to Western intellectuals in terms of being significantly educated and engaging in intellectual work, they are distinguished from the latter by their keen awareness in taking social responsibility as their essential commitment. The intellectual in the modern Western sense, according to the French philosopher Julien Benda's (1867–1956) classic definition, is 'the guardian and possessor of independent judgement owing loyalty to truth alone' (Jennings and Kemp-Welch 1997, 1). Western intellectuals are characterised as outsiders, 'living in self-imposed exile and on the

margins of society' (Jennings and Kemp-Welch 1997, 1–2). They are content in remaining alienated from the state and the people (Schwartz 1960, 605).

In contrast, Chinese intellectuals take social responsibility as their basic duty and ultimate concern. This self-perception comes from the prototype of the ancient *Shi* people (scholar-officials). They constituted the intelligentsia of ancient China. Literate people were institutionally absorbed into government and became a special social class. They held official positions and served the state. Gradually, being officials serving the state became a lofty pursuit for the *Shi* people. It comprised the pursuits of serving the state and intellectual self-achievement. However, an official career could fluctuate and was often frustrating. Derived from Confucian and Daoist thoughts,⁷ three types of self-fulfilment were formulated so as to ensure intellectuals could find values in whatever sociopolitical situations. These three types of self-fulfilment are *lide* 立德 (establishing an example of virtue), *ligong* 立功 (establishing successful service), and *liyan* 立言 (establishing literary authority).⁸ As long as the intellectual fulfils one of the goals, s/he lives a worthwhile life. His or her contributions will be recognised and his or her name will be remembered in posterity. It is expressed in common Chinese language as 'eternalising his or her name in history.' These three ways of self-realisations helped *Shi* people realise their selves elastically in the face of social changes. Chinese intellectuals' self-value and China's social cognition of intellectuals are shaped within this tradition.

⁷ Confucianism shares the Daoist idea of adopting a transcendent attitude and the 'wuwei (non-doing 无为)' tactics in dealing with adversity. This idea is expressed in Confucius's words, 'My doctrines make no way. I will get upon a raft, and float about on the sea(道不行, 乘桴浮于海).' See Confucius, Mencius et al. 1971[ca. 8th century BC – ca. 3rd century B.C]. *Confucius: Confucian Analects, The Great Learning and The Doctrine of the Mean* New York: Dover Publications, Inc. 174–175.

⁸ See 'Zuozhuan: Xiang gong ershisi nian' (Zuozhuan: Duke Xiang 左传 • 襄公二十四年). <http://www2.iath.virginia.edu:8080/exist/cocoon/xwomen/texts/chunqiu/d2.15/1/0/bilingual>. Retrieved on 23 August 2016.

The first type of self-fulfilment—‘establishing an example of virtue’—is regarded as the highest achievement—to cultivate sagely virtues such as Confucian devotion to the nation, or Daoist ‘non-doing’ so as to obey natural law. A sage is the model for others to emulate. But becoming a sage is an infinite process. Both Confucians and Daoists think that cultivating virtues with selflessness as the core is a lifelong enterprise. Therefore, the self-achievement of establishing an example of virtue—*lide*—is the ultimate pursuit and meanwhile is compulsory for all intellectuals. Everyone is supposed to cultivate the self, to be a selfless person through one’s whole life without exceptions (Hegel 1985, 7). The second type *ligong*—‘establishing successful service’—concerns the self in relation to the state. A person who has done a meritorious deed for the state and the people is granted glories. His or her name is also recorded in history and eternally remembered. The third type *liyan*—‘establishing literary authority’—means dedicating oneself to intellectual pursuit, as demonstrated by Sima Qian’s pursuit: establishing his own school of thought. The pursuits of *ligong* and/or *liyan* are in line with the Confucian concept of the intellectual. But the choice of whether identifying the self with *ligong* or *liyan* is adjusted by Daoist thought. The Confucian part of the self drives the intellectual to concentrate on an official career so as to give successful service to the state. The Daoist part of the self functions as a force drawing the intellectual from his/her official career to intellectual pursuit.

It is clear that Chinese intellectuals are not attentive to material desires or egocentric interests but to spiritual pursuits and social concerns. No matter whether they serve the state or steer away from an official career, they do not treat themselves as independent individuals free from social responsibility. By identifying themselves with these three types of self-fulfilment, Chinese intellectuals achieve realisation and

meet social commitments regardless of life's vicissitudes. This self-identification generally remained unchanged until the end of the nineteenth century. Beginning with the first Opium War (1839–1842), imperial China fell into the plight of being semi-colonial and semi-feudal. From then, nationalism was written into the self-perception of Chinese intellectuals. Their self-realisation was connected with the grand narrative of liberating the country from colonial and domestic wars, and modernising the country. Along with the weakness and decay of the state was the collapse of traditional values, which effectively sustained the sociopolitical order of traditional China for thousands of years.

Twentieth-century intellectuals feverishly sought alternative cultural values to fill this vacuum. Anglo-American liberalism was first introduced to China as a panacea for strengthening the state and regaining a sense of national dignity. Hu Shi, a student of the US philosopher John Dewey, became the spokesman for US liberalism and Dewey's pragmatic philosophy (Schwartz 1960, 614). Marxism-Leninism's class theory was absorbed by the CPC to tackle Chinese difficulties. Considering China was an agrarian country with the majority of the population living in the countryside, the CPC under Mao's leadership localised Marxism-Leninism and laid the hope of revolution on the countryside and peasantry. The CPC's political stance won the widest support from the Chinese population leading them to victory. In 1949 the PRC was founded, which marked the nation eventually realising its centennial dream: re-establishing a unified and independent country.

The founding of the PRC marks the ending of the semi-colonial and semi-feudal era. The success of the CPC justified its legitimacy and the theory of class struggle in Marxism-Leninism, and also won broad approval of the people. Under the leadership of the CPC, constructing a socialist China became the keystone of the

post-1949 public. The indoctrination of socialist ideology was regarded as crucially important in constructing socialism. According to the class theory of Marxism-Leninism, the proletarian class consisted of labouring industrial workers and poor landless peasants. As the majority of the Chinese nation, their interests represented the fundamental interests of the nation. However, as society's disadvantaged people, they would not be able to improve their poor situation without assistance. Egalitarianism was indoctrinated as the basic tenet for constructing socialist China.

Collectivist interests were given priority over individualist interests. Altruistic values rooted in Confucianism were advocated and stressed in the form of socialist thought education. Basically and theoretically, altruistic values encapsulated in socialist ideology are not against the value of Confucian selflessness long recognised by Chinese intellectuals. However, in compliance with Marxist class theories, they did not belong to the proletarian class, nor were they from that class. Most were from wealthy families. Therefore, they were assumed to lack knowledge about poor people and thus lack empathy for them. With this assumption, intellectuals were presumed to need thought reform.

The 'thought reform' campaign of the PRC

The term 'new man' came from the Soviet Union. But Chinese measures for training the 'new man' differed from those adopted in the Soviet Union, for 'thought' and 'man' were interpreted in Chinese cultural contexts. Therefore, the sufferings that Chinese intellectuals experienced differed from those experienced by Soviet intellectuals in the Gulag, although imprisonment, incarceration, and forced manual labour were also applied in some cases (Schwartz 1960, 610). Chinese intellectuals' 'thought reform' actually started in the 1930s–1940s in Yan'an, Shaanxi province, which was the location of the CPC headquarters. Through the 1930s 'thought

reform' campaign, the CPC distributed its political theories and ideals, conforming intellectuals' thoughts, and thus assembled all positive forces for fighting against the Japanese aggressors and unifying the country (for Chinese intellectuals and the Chinese Communist revolution, see for example Huang 2013; U 2007, 977). Chinese intellectuals' 'thought reform' was actually a particular historical, political, and cultural product. For Chinese intellectuals who lived through the same historical period and conditions, 'thought reform' was not strange or unacceptable. It became part of intellectuals' social life. In the CPC discourse, intellectuals' crucial contribution to the CPC revolution was acknowledged. CPC leaders themselves were intellectuals who were also schooled in traditional China. As a CPC resolution adopted in 1939 stated, 'Without the participation of the intellectuals, victory in the revolution will be impossible' (quoted in Chen 1960, 4). Due to the high demand of altruistic morals of socialist ideology and the tradition of lifelong self-cultivation for morals, 'thought reform' was considered to be a necessary and effective method of assembling all forces and strengths to construct a socialist China.

With the unfolding of China's industrialisation in the 1950s, the cooperation and support of intellectuals was in great need. However, the CPC was confronted with a dilemma on how to treat intellectuals. On the one hand, the CPC was clear that industrialisation could not be realised without intellectuals' contributions. On the other hand, it thought that the intellectuals were not politically trustful (Chen 1960, 3; Huang 2013, 264). The CPC self-defined as the 'organized vanguard of the working class' (Chen 1960, 8). Serving the interests of the 'people' was the ultimate goal of its revolution. It demanded self-sacrifice of the non-working classes to the working class. This led to the CPC's uneasiness over intellectuals, because most of intellectuals grew up in wealthy families and many of them were educated in the

West. They were assumed to lack affiliation with the working class, or to have been contaminated by bourgeois education. And to some degree such an assumption was justified. As an intellectual observed of fellow intellectuals, a problem was that some:

are disdainful of the labouring people ... rely on book knowledge and consequently commit such ideological errors as subjective thinking, reformism, utopian socialism, and equalitarianism ... are eager to participate in the revolution when it is successful, but become pessimistic when it suffers reverses ... are accustomed to a libertine and individualistic way of life ... (Huang Chia-te 1952, quoted in Chen 1960, 8)

It was assumed that an ideologically correct person could ‘become a successful worker for the proletarian revolution’ (Chen 1960, 9). Therefore, transforming old-type intellectuals into new-type intellectuals free of the thought of the newly emergent bourgeois class became urgent in the 1950s, especially with the outbreak of the Cold War. Influential events, such as the 1950 Korean War and the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, accelerated Chinese intellectuals’ ‘thought reform into a series of campaigns’ (Schwartz 1960, 612–620). Due to its involvement in the Korean War, the US was treated as ‘the symbol of capitalism’ and anti-American ‘thought reform’ spread across the PRC in late 1951 (Chen 1960, 1, 54, 56, 62, 66, 74). It started in higher institutions such as universities and research institutes (U 2007, 979). In September 1951 ‘the first 6000 college personnel underwent thought reform in Beijing and Tianjing’ (U 2007, 981). The forms of intellectuals’ ‘thought reform’ included participating in socialist political study, joining in labour production,

conducting self-criticism, eradicating individualism, and cutting off the connections with people from America and all other capitalist countries. Political study and physical labour were the main methods developed in an attempt to nurture intellectuals' empathy for the working class. Scholars who were preoccupied with individual academic pursuits and scholarly status were accused of being individualist and selfish. Higher education was reformed to adopt Soviet curriculums in order to eliminate 'American bourgeois ideology' from courses (Chen 1960, 53–57).

When the 1956 Hungarian Revolution and upheavals in East-European Communist countries happened, another campaign in the domain of thought reform was launched in the period 1956 to 1957, named the 'Hundred Flowers' campaign. Following it were the CPC's rectification, and the 'Anti-Rightist' campaign. The 'Hundred Flowers' campaign, as the slogan 'Let a hundred flowers bloom, let a hundred schools contend' suggests, was initiated to encourage intellectuals to raise opinions or criticism aimed at improving the governance of the CPC. The CPC had presumed the critiques by the intellectuals would be mild. Unexpectedly, their critiques were harsh and evolved into attacking the legitimacy of the CPC, becoming a threat to its leadership (Schwartz 1960, 620). Those who attacked the CPC in 1957 were subsequently branded 'rightists' (Doolin 1961, 39). Those who committed 'grave mistakes' were forced to reform their thought through physical labour. The majority of intellectuals based in urban institutions were organised into collectivities in the 'May 7 cadre schools'—special 'schools' set up in the countryside, catering to cadres and intellectuals for re-education through manual work and political studies. The cadres studying at cadre schools '[got] their regular wages and the same welfare facilities as when they [were] on the job. The term generally [was] for a year or so,

the least six months, the most two to three years.’⁹ Radical persecutions of intellectuals mainly happened during the later Cultural Revolution, caused by fanatical Red Guards.

Ningkun Wu: an uneasy combination of Hamlet and Du Fu

During its first thirty years of the PRC, Ningkun Wu was unfortunately among the first group of intellectuals attacked in the ‘thought reform’ campaign. He was a lecturer of English literature in a leading university in Beijing after he returned from the US. Although he was welcomed as a patriotic intellectual, he was not exempt from participating in ‘thought reform’ so as to ‘purify’ thought in line with socialist ideology. But he appeared blunt to the politics of ‘thought reform,’ showing a passiveness towards the activities for indoctrinating socialist ideology. On the contrary, he was not hesitant in exhibiting his passion for advocating ‘freedom of speech’ that he had gained in the US. Additionally, his educational background in the US and lecturing in English literature made him a useful element in feeding anti-US sentiment that spread through China during the 1950s. In 1958 he was officially labelled as a ‘rightist’ and began twenty-two years of ‘thought reform.’

‘Thought reform’ is the Chinese intellectuals’ collective memory of the Maoist era. Almost all intellectuals were the subject of ‘thought reform’ and more or less physically and mentally hurt. But with respect to personal accounts of this history, there are different choices. Compared with autobiographies authored by China-based intellectuals, Ningkun Wu’s text presents a different style. His recounting of experiences during the CPC’s ‘thought reform’ retrieves sources from English and Chinese literatures, and both influence how he constructs his life and self. From English literature, Shakespeare’s ‘Hamlet’ is a figure that Ningkun Wu

⁹ ‘The “May 7” Cadre School,’ *Peking Review*. Vol. 19: 5–7. <http://massline.org/PekingReview/PR1972/PR1972-19.pdf>. Retrieved on 31 August 2016.

frequently refers to for accounts of his sufferings. From Chinese literature, Du Fu (712–770), a prominent poet living in the most turbulent period of the Tang dynasty (618–907), is the key person, from whose experience, according to Ningkun Wu, he obtained courage and strength to survive the unrest and trauma (see for example Wu and Li 1993, 34, 72, 104, 136, 366). Du Fu is called the ‘Poet-Historian’ and the ‘Poet-Saint’ in China. William Hung (1893–1980), a famous Chinese educator and scholar active in both Chinese and US academia, undertook a comprehensive study of Du Fu. His work *Tu Fu: China’s Greatest Poet* is still considered the most important work on Du Fu (Tu Fu in Wade-Giles) in English. Hung commented that Du Fu’s handsome and brilliant poetry allow him to be introduced to Western readers as ‘the Chinese Virgil, Horace, Ovid, Shakespeare, Milton, Burns, Wordsworth, Béranger, Hugo or Baudelaire’ (Hung 1952, 1).

Ningkun Wu frequently refers to Hamlet—a well-known literary figure in the West—and Du Fu—a commonly known literary figure in China. Of Hamlet Ningkun Wu stated, he ‘suffered as an archetypal modern intellectual’ (Wu and Li 1993, 101). As to Du Fu, he was certainly an intellectual since he was a *Shi* of ancient China. Referring to these two definitive yardsticks of the intellectual, respectively known in the West and in China, Ningkun Wu demonstrated his self-definition of being an intellectual in line with both Chinese and Western concepts of the intellectual.

Following the traditions of Chinese intellectuals’ self-expression, stereotypically represented by Sima Qian and Tao Qian’s autobiographies, a Chinese intellectual dominated by the Confucian self would pursue self-fulfilment in academics after s/he experienced suffering in social life. This is the embodiment of the Confucian aspiration of establishing literary authority *liyan*, as exemplified by Sima’s devotion to compiling a comprehensive history and to the ideal of

establishing his own school of thought. An intellectual when dominated by the Daoist self would retire to be content with a leisurely, indolent, and spontaneous life after suffering, as exemplified by Tao's 'non-doing' lifestyle: content the self with literature and wine. If following this tradition, Ningkun Wu would have expressed himself with a reconciliatory and transcendental attitude towards a life of suffering. He would not have indulged in portraying his suffering self. He would have gained more philosophical insights into life and the self, treating suffering life comprehendingly. However, the fact is that Ningkun Wu not only indulged in the description of victimisation, but also sought to get enlightenment from Confucianism and Daoism. Consequently, his writing creates an uneasy self, one that oscillates between the Western and Chinese concepts of the self.

As illustrated by the China-based life-writings when compared with Ningkun Wu and Nien Cheng's texts, China-based authors do not depart from the autobiographical traditions initiated by Sima and Tao. Sima and Tao's texts were written after they experienced tribulations in their official careers and subsequently resigned from their posts. In their texts, both authors eschewed recounting their sufferings but highlighted their intellectual interests and concerns. Though Tao ostensibly expressed no ambition to establish his stature in literature, he did so through an innovative autobiographical style. In light of traditional intellectuals' three types of self-realisation: *lide* to establish an example of virtue, *ligong* to do a meritorious deed for the state, and *liyan* to dedicate to intellectual achievements, Sima and Tao achieved their self-realisations through *liyan*. They were attentive to intellectual achievements so as to *liyan*, rather than indulging in self-pity, anguish and/or resentment because of adversity. As Sima expressed, it was worthless to be obsessed with personal loss, even death. Interpreting his sufferings from the court—

castration—he did not think it worthwhile to commit suicide because of the humiliation and physical injury. He stated, ‘A man can die only once, and whether death to him is as weighty as Mount T’ai [Mount Tai in *pinyin*, a culturally significant mount in China] or as light as a feather depends on the reason for which he dies’ (Sima 1965[ca. 93 BC], 99). An intellectual should die for his/her supposed worth—‘as weighty as Mount Tai’, otherwise his or her death is worthless—‘as light as a feather.’ Since death is interpreted in relation to the intellectual’s self-value, physical sufferings do not deserve more ink than intellectual concerns and social responsibility. This view on death and suffering is underpinned by the thoughts of Confucianism and Daoism, bearing the Confucian intellectual’s social responsibility and the transcendental flavour of Daoism. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Confucian concerns are embedded in the convention of *Chunqiu*-style—writing to convey values.

Evidently, the China-based texts collected follow Sima and Tao’s paths. These texts span long live yet their recounting of the sufferings under the CPC’s ‘thought reform’ and the Cultural Revolution are restrained.¹⁰ Taking Bai Hanzhen’s *The Secret of the Falling Leaf: A Woman Teacher’s Spiritual Journey* (1990) and Xu Yuanchong’s *Vanished Springs* (2011[1996]) as examples, in Bai Hanzhen’s seven chapters covering two hundred and twenty-two pages, only Chapter Four—twenty-one pages or less than one-tenth of the book—is dedicated to life during the Cultural Revolution (Bai 1990, 119–140). Xu Yuanchong’s text includes one passage of about five hundred Chinese characters boldly sketching life spent in the 1960s (Xu 2011[1996], 280–281), for he thinks this part of life is valueless and not worth

¹⁰ See for example, Zhou Yiliang’s *After All, Only a Pedant* (1989); Mao-Dun’s *Mao-Dun’s Autobiography* (1996); Xu Yuanchong’s *Vanished Springs* (2011[1996]); He Liyi’s *Mr. China’s Son: A Villager’s Life* (1993); Tao Dun’s *An Intellectual’s Self-Account* (1987); Bai Hanzhen’s *The Secret of the Falling Leaf: A Woman Teacher’s Spiritual Journey* (1990); and Dong Zhujun’s *My Centurial Life* (2008[1997]).

remembering (Xu 2011[1996], 2–3). Mao-Dun's *Mao-Dun's Autobiography* (1996) of three hundred and eighty-two pages devotes only five pages to the decade of the Cultural Revolution (Mao-Dun 1996, 408–413). These authors' coincidental understatement of the suffering under 'thought reform' and the Cultural Revolution demonstrates that China-based intellectual authors follow Sima's path of perceiving the self on a long life scale rather than in a particular period. China-based authors did not think experiences of 'thought reform' worth stressing or treating as a representative part of their lives. They addressed themselves to the entire course of their lives and thus encompassed life's vicissitudes across time. This historical sense helps reduce the subjective sense that features personal concerns. They subsumed their selves into a more general description of events, culture, and society, thus showing allegiance to Chinese autobiographical heritage.

Certainly there are some China-based texts that focus on 'thought reform' experiences such as Zhang Xianliang's *Grass Soup* (1994); Yang Jiang's *A Cadre School Life* (1982); and Ji Xianlin's *Random Recollections of the Cow Shed* (2013[1998]). Ningkun Wu's text is more comparable in this sense. Comparatively, Ningkun Wu's account about his self and sufferings presents a sense of uneasy ambiguity, while the China-based authors present a certainty in portraying their selves and lives. In *Grass Soup*, Zhang Xianliang describes how he and his workmates were all 'rightist' intellectuals who were forced to reform thought through manual work on a farm. In the face of incredible hardships brought about by severe food shortage and political pressure, they managed their lives in a humble way. His text concentrates on the portrayal of Chinese intellectuals suffering 'thought reform' and starvation but makes no explicit attempt to interpret intellectuals' collective trauma or his personal tragedy. This understatement of

suffering and the concentration on describing the struggles against starvation not only reflects an individual's limited ability to resist such sociopolitical forces and a human being's instinct for survival, but also, more importantly, reflects Zhang Xianliang's identification of his self with the broader context, not with his innermost feelings. His Confucian and Daoist beliefs determined how he would recount his experiences and which elements would be stressed (see for example Starr 2013, 159–181).

Yang Jiang's *A Cadre School Life* depicts her experiences in the so-called 'cadre school.' 'Cadre schools' were located in the countryside, intended to cater for intellectuals and CPC officials mobilised from urban areas to rural areas for 'thought reform' through living a countryside life and doing farm work. Yang Jiang produces a calm and detailed description of daily life. In spite of coarse living conditions and the ridiculous sociopolitical environment, she remains calm and obedient. Her narrative is sometimes bitterly sad but never anguishing or angry. As one of China's foremost critics comments, this book:

pervades one with a sense of sorrow and loss; we lament as she does but do not feel dejected, we sense her indignation at being wronged but find in this no hate or reproach. Every word is eloquent in its sincerity and truthfulness (Min Ze in Barmé 1982, 8).

Yang Jiang's posture reveals that the Confucian part of her self plays the dominant role in her social life while the Daoist part ensures a private and confidential space, enabling her to respond resiliently to adversities. A very short chapter of her *Lost in*

the Crowd illuminates Yang Jiang's Confucian and Daoist life philosophy. It only comprises two paragraphs:

In the West they say 'Every cloud has a silver lining'. The people who suffered calamity together during the Years of the Horse and the Ram [the years 1966 and 1967]—victims of different degrees of hardship and physical abuse—somehow achieved a better understanding of each other, acquiring a sense of mutual sympathy, even friendship. Wasn't this the silver, or even the golden lining to those dark clouds? The denser the clouds, the more easily that rim of silver can turn to gold.

It is often said that 'rainbows fade too soon'; but even the blackest clouds cannot obscure the sky forever. The darkness of the past is too painful to think about; but that golden radiance will never fade from my memory. It is warm and bright even now (Yang 1989, 52).

These two paragraphs demonstrate that in addition to Confucian and Daoist thoughts, Yang Jiang also absorbs philosophical nutrition from both Western and Chinese literary and cultural treasures. The Western proverb paints a static relationship between good and bad, while the Chinese proverb grasps a dynamic relationship between good and bad. In this dynamic, good and bad alternatively occur, but good is generally dominant.

Ji Xianlin's *Random Recollections of the Cow Shed* (2013[1998]) provides straightforward descriptions of the brutal persecution inflicted on Chinese intellectuals during the ten-year Cultural Revolution. As Ji Xianlin iterated, his

writing was to condemn the Cultural Revolution and the victimisation of Chinese intellectuals. He was attempting to inspire the Chinese to reflect on what made the Cultural Revolution happen and what lessons should be drawn from it. Despite his personal account, his writing is full of deep concern about Chinese intellectuals' treatment and the future of the nation. It is a typical self-identification of the Confucian intellectual.

In contrast to these China-based intellectual authors whose life stories reflect Chinese literary and cultural traditions, Ningkun Wu frequently refers to Western literature, especially English literature. It might be arguable that his preference for Western literature is due to his major in English literature and lecturing in English literature at university. However, also of relevance are the texts he references and with which he self identifies. These English works mentioned in his text include literary classics and publications with political implications. Classics include: Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *King Lear*; Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847); F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* (1925); Leo Tolstoy's *War and Peace* (1869); Victor Marie Hugo's *Les Misérables* (1862); John Steinbeck's *The Pearl* (1947); James Hilton's *Goodbye, Mr Chips* (1934); Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726); O Henry's *The Cop and the Anthem* (1904); Henry James's *The American* (1877); and other works authored by Chaucer, Dickens, Thackeray, Milton, and Byron.

According to Ningkun Wu, these classics carry a 'humanistic tradition' (Wu and Li 1993, 25). Among them the character of Hamlet is most frequently cited, with Ningkun Wu comparing the tragedy of Hamlet with his own tribulations under the CPC's 'thought reform.' Ningkun Wu was not so confident in comparing himself with Hamlet, but he still thought the comparison tenable, as both were intellectuals.

Hamlet's tragedy is his great losses: 'a father, a mother, an angelic sweetheart, a kingdom, and his own precious life' (Wu and Li 1993, 101). In order to maintain Hamlet's relevance to his own trials, Ningkun Wu offered an excusatory self-defence: 'I am not Prince Hamlet' (Wu and Li 1993, 101). In Ningkun Wu's view, Hamlet's suffering 'gave the noble Dane his unique stature as a tragic hero pre-eminently worthy of his suffering' (Wu and Li 1993, 101). Ningkun Wu's subtext is that Hamlet's great suffering matched his identity as a prince. Here arises a paradox. Ningkun Wu associated himself with Hamlet, but in Hamlet he failed to find a satisfactory explanation for his own suffering and sense of selfhood. Seeking a solution he turned to Chinese literature and culture.

Chinese writers he mentions include Du Fu, Shen Congwen (1902–1988), and Chen Yuyi (1090–1138), a poet of the Song dynasty (960–1279). Ningkun Wu stated that Du Fu was not his favourite classical Chinese poet, but he began to appreciate him because Du Fu enlightened him with his posture towards suffering. He states:

Always lamenting but never despairing, he [Du Fu] kept faith with life
and transformed his poignant anguish into immortal poetry, which
continued to give heart to the insulted and the injured (Wu and Li
1993, 101).

Despite saying so, Ningkun Wu did not totally accept Du Fu's model so as to transform 'poignant anguish' into intellectual pursuit. Instead, he transformed his 'poignant anguish' into 'poignant' sarcasm. He wrote:

I recalled how the ‘poet saint’ [Du Fu], constantly driven from place to place by the winds of war, had in his fifties died a pauper’s death of bacillary dysentery from eating spoiled beef. Who was I to complain of a sheltered life in a socialist camp? I wanted thought reform indeed (Wu and Li 1993, 101).

These words illustrate Ningkun Wu’s ambivalence in interpreting his life and self. On the one hand he insisted on linking himself with Hamlet in portraying a tragic self victimised by ‘thought reform,’ but on the other he identified with the Chinese intellectuals’ Confucian and Daoist tradition in the face of suffering so as to obtain spiritual strength. Indulgence in victimisation means rejecting the Confucian and Daoist reconciliation with suffering, while accepting the Chinese intellectuals’ tradition means moving away from insistence on portraying the tragic self. This ambivalence is caused by Ningkun Wu’s bilateral self-identification. He constantly finds himself situated in a dilemma of self-identification. He could not identify with either value system totally, nor could he refuse. As a result, his self-identification frequently oscillates between the literary and cultural references of the West and China. When he needed to evoke his suffering, he turned to Western classics, for example Hamlet, and publications bearing anti-Communist implications. When he needed to express his courage and strength to survive suffering, he turned to Chinese literature and culture, although he also found a little from English literary works, for example, *Goodbye, Mr Chips* which describes Mr Chips’s devotion to his pupils regardless of whatever challenges he faced (Wu and Li 1993, 183).

The publications bearing political implications mentioned by Ningkun Wu come from opposing camps: pro-Marxism and anti-Marxism. The magazine *The*

Masses and the Mainstream, *Das Kapital*, *A People's History of England*, *Illusion and Reality*, *Literature and Reality*, and *Freedom Road* belong to the pro-Marxist camp. While *1984* and *Darkness at Noon* belong to the anti-Marxist camp. According to Ningkun Wu, pro-Communist publications and his education in the US majoring in English literature fostered his patriotism. He wrote:

the Bible and Shakespeare opened my eyes to visions of man's lofty aspirations. The simple college motto, 'faith, learning, service,' guided me forward in my pursuit of knowledge to serve my motherland (Wu and Li 1993, 3).

Nevertheless, it was the pro-Marxist publications which were an important factor driving him to return from the US to serve the new China. But, unexpectedly, his initial identification with Marxist ideology led to his victimisation under the CPC's 'thought reform' targeting intellectuals. He cited the Czech Communist martyr Julius Fučík's (1903–1943) *Notes from the Gallows* to explain that his victimisation was unexpected but inevitable due to the fundamental similarity between the Communist and Nazi regimes. He wrote,

I could not help but feel the irony that the supreme sacrifices made by Fuchik [Fučík] and others only paved the way for the establishment of regimes that rivaled the Nazis in restricting freedom. And the further irony that it was allotted to a survivor of a Communist labor camp to bear witness to the sufferings of a Communist victim of a Nazi torture chamber! (Wu and Li 1993, 183).

Fučík's tragedy became a real testimony to Communist regimes as portrayed in the novels *1984* and *Darkness at Noon*. Ningkun Wu's analogy and projective explanation made his victimisation under 'thought reform' easily accessible to Western readers. But similar to his self-identification with Hamlet, he failed to reach an even better understanding of his self and life. Once again after drawing from Western references he also found it necessary to turn towards Chinese literary and cultural traditions. This kind of oscillation repeatedly appears throughout his text and thus results in an uneasy expression of his self. After depicting his victimised life and self, he turns to Chinese culture and literature. He wrote, 'I had learned to live by the sage proverb "He is happy who knows contentment with his lot"' (Wu and Li 1993, 183). He recalled that it was reading the modern writer Shen Congwen's novels that saved him from 'fatigue' after hours of backbreaking labour (Wu and Li 1993, 103).

Particularly, he explains how water was the inspiration for his understanding of life: 'Looking at the gently flowing water, I felt as if there suddenly came to my mind a little understanding of life' (Wu and Li 1993, 103). Water in Chinese culture bears unique symbolic significations and emotional attachment. Water implies lasting life, flexibility, tenacity, and so on (see for example Yang 1993). The reference to water is typically used by the Chinese to illuminate philosophical ideas about life and human beings. This further demonstrates that Ningkun Wu gained insights into his life and self from Chinese literary and cultural traditions. In this sense, the self he constructs reflects the canonical features of the Chinese intellectual self, both Confucian and Daoist. Lastly Ningkun Wu quoted an entire poem by Chen Yuyi to express a sentiment of exclaiming the fast fading of life, people and events in the river of time (Wu and Li 1993, 343–344). This again demonstrates that Ningkun

Wu ultimately located his self within Chinese culture. Chinese culture offered him a firm and comfortable base for the self, but his sense of individual subjectivity still drew from Enlightenment values he had learnt while in the West and through his reading and teaching of English literature. This is why he made a formula for his thirty-year suffering under the CPC's 'thought reform'—'I came, I suffered, I survived' (Wu and Li 1993, 365). This formula is ostensibly enlightening and firm, but in fact ambiguous and unsettling, reflecting his self-identification oscillating between a Western self and a Chinese self.

It is this unsettled and oscillating self that determines Ningkun Wu's narrative content is oriented towards his individual suffering but written within a Chinese autobiographical tradition. *A Single Tear* in a strict sense is Ningkun Wu's story of 'thought reform' experience. It focuses on the events surrounding his 'thought reform' experience and is constructed literarily. Dramatic effects are achieved through selection and arrangement of episodes. Three main threads are woven through the text. One is the story concerning Ningkun Wu and the Nobel Prize winner Li Zhengdao who appears in the text as Dr T. D. Lee. They befriended each other, for they were both once overseas students in America. In 1951, they waved farewell to each other at a US port because Ningkun Wu chose to return to serve the new China while Lee chose to stay in the US. Different choices led to different lives. As Ningkun Wu stated, they lived 'in two different worlds, across an unbridgeable gap' (Wu and Li 1993, 341). When they met again in 1979 in Beijing. Lee was welcomed as a distinguished scientist by the Chinese government while Ningkun Wu was a common intellectual just released from 'thought reform.' Lee's achievement and worldwide fame and Ningkun Wu's ordinariness proved Lee's

concern that returning to China risked ‘being brainwashed’ was correct. Ningkun Wu’s patriotic return was unwise (Wu and Li 1993, 5–6, 341).

The second thread is related to F Scott Fitzgerald’s novel, *The Great Gatsby*. Because he included this book in his students’ syllabus, he was criticised for corrupting students’ thoughts by exposing them to this bourgeois lifestyle. The handy evidence was that the book cover pictured ‘a hand with painted fingernails holding a glass of wine’ (Wu and Li 1993, 20). After the Cultural Revolution, however, he was invited by a prestigious journal of world literature studies to translate this book into Chinese (Wu and Li 1993, 20, 349).

The third thread is Ningkun Wu’s two verdicts concerning his ‘thought.’ In 1958, confessing under duress to a ‘problem’ in thought, he was asked to sign the verdict of his ‘guilt’ (Wu and Li 1993, 64). Then, in 1979, he was asked to sign the verdict of his innocence (Wu and Li 1993, 340). Through the opposing verdicts and his experiences with Lee and *The Great Gatsby*, Ningkun Wu described the ridiculousness of the CPC’s ‘thought reform.’ Constructed along these three threads, Ningkun Wu’s experience of ‘thought reform’ becomes a gripping story of an intellectual victimised by the CPC.

From the perspective of expressing the self, the elaboration of these three threads demonstrates the Chinese tradition of self-perception and expression of the intellectual. In a general sense, according to Larson, Ningkun Wu’s text is a ‘circumstantial’ autobiographical narrative: it expresses the self with references to the external material world. He stressed the role of his family in his life. He owed debts of love and survival to his family members—his stepmother, mother-in-law, wife, and children. However, only in a narrow sense is Ningkun Wu’s narrative faithful to the traditions of Chinese intellectuals’ life-writing: most narrative interest

focuses on intellectual pursuit, which is the manifestation of the intellectuals' *liyan* which is dedicated to intellectual achievement. This is even evident in his explanation of his professional achievements in translating works such as *The Great Gatsby*, *The Pearl*, and so on (Wu and Li 1993, 56, 169, 301, 348, 349, 366).

Nien Cheng: a personal testimony to the CPC's 'thought reform'

Nien Cheng's text is the account of her six-and-a-half-year experience in confinement for the wrongful accusation of being a British 'spy.' She stated that the 'accusation that I had committed crimes against my own country was so ludicrous that I thought it was just an excuse for punishing me because I had dared to live well' (Cheng 1995[1986], 116). In Nien Cheng's understanding, 'to live well' means 'to live a high quality life in Western style.' Throughout the narrative, she constantly expresses a high degree of identification with Western lifestyle and values. Quoting others' comments about her, Nien Cheng provides a confirmed self-affirmation of her 'Westernness.' A Red Guard who raided her house for evidence of her bourgeois decadence was surprised at her Western-style life, saying 'We have been to many homes of the capitalist class. Your house is the worst of all, the most reactionary of all. Are you a Chinese or are you a foreigner?' (Cheng 1995[1986], 76). A similar comment was made about her behaviour. She asked for some workers to do some building work for her. Thinking that the building implements were state-owned but used for her private purpose, she offered to pay for the usage. But she was laughed at by the workers. They called her a 'foreigner who did not understand China' (Cheng 1995[1986], 370). According to Nien Cheng's explanation, these workers and any others from the working class adopted a 'casual attitude towards work and government property.' They cynically translated the Marxist slogan 'The working class must exercise leadership in everything!' into 'they were owners of government

property.’ They could use state-owned implements for free. Nien Cheng’s behaviour carried the value-exchange feature of commodity society, which was alien in China at the time of the Cultural Revolution.

At that historical moment of the Cultural Revolution, it was to a great extent her ‘Westernness’ that brought her accusations and persecution. Whereas Ningkun Wu, Yang Jiang, Zhang Xianliang, and many other authors mentioned previously, explain their suffering through their role as intellectuals and/or the routines of daily life, Nien Cheng focuses on material deprivation. She reiterates her appreciation of her Western lifestyle and the suffering her cherished and privileged life brought her under the CPC’s ‘thought reform.’ She intends her portrayal of the victimised self to be an exemplar of the evils of the CPC’s state system, which is held to be anathema to desired communitarian values.

First of all, Nien Cheng described her Western lifestyle and justified her ‘Westernness.’ Nien Cheng, as the heroine, enjoyed superb material conditions, tasted the Western good life and displayed the elegant disposition of a ‘modern’ Westernised female. The text begins with her self-depiction, which is painted against the broad canvas of the beginning of the Cultural Revolution in 1966. In this ‘painting,’ Nien Cheng is a graceful lady dressed in a *qipao* (cheongsam 旗袍)¹¹ content with her comfortable life in a house decorated in Western style and situated in China’s biggest city—Shanghai. This was a large house, with nine rooms and four bathrooms (Cheng 1995[1986], 78). But Nien Cheng said, ‘Indeed, my house was

¹¹ A *qipao* is a tight-fitting dress. The style was created in the 1920s in Shanghai as a compromise between the influences of ‘unbridled’ Western dress as seen in Hollywood movies and the conservative dressing customs of Confucian society. The *qipao* from then on became, in pre-1949 China, a badge of modern and modest Chinese women. They were urban, sophisticated, educated, and fashionable, living a modern and exquisite life. For relevant information see *Linglong*, a Chinese magazine published in Shanghai from 1931 to 1937. <https://archive.org/details/cullinglong&tab=collection>. Retrieved on 12 September 2016; Edwards, Louise. 2012. ‘The Shanghai Modern Woman’s American Dreams: Imagining America’s Depravity to Produce China’s “Moderate Modernity”.’ *Pacific Historical Review* 81 (4): 567–601; Gulliver, Katrina. 2009. ‘Shanghai’s Modernity in the Western Eye.’ *East West Connections* 9 (1): 120–145; Orchard, John E. 1936. ‘Shanghai.’ *Geographical Review* 26 (1): 1–31.

not a mansion, and by western standards, it was modest' (Cheng 1995[1986], 3). Three live-in servants attended her and her daughter, the only family members living in the house. Nien Cheng stated that her family was one of a dozen families preserving the pre-1949 lifestyle of rich people in Shanghai. While ten million ordinary Shanghai citizens endured a low standard of living with food and housing in severe shortage, Nien Cheng was able to continue her extravagant Western lifestyle. In her friend's words, her house was 'an oasis of comfort and elegance in the midst of the city's drabness' (Cheng 1995[1986], 3). As late as 1966 she was still very proud of being able to 'enjoy good taste while the rest of the city was being taken over by proletarian realism' (Cheng 1995[1986], 3). She wrote, 'I did not voluntarily change my way of life' (Cheng 1995[1986], 3). She continued showing aloofness, arrogance, and aristocratic attitudes towards ordinary people, and indifference to the proletarian revolution, although the proletarian revolution was increasingly fierce on the eve of the Cultural Revolution. Some critics argue that her insulation from others as well as her astoundingly luxurious lifestyle made her completely anachronistic and thus a ready target in the fierce revolutionary context of Shanghai (Huebner 1988, 372; Ogden 1987, 2-3; Rosen 1988, 339).

However, Nien Cheng did not ever ascribe any fault to herself. She thought that responsibility for her persecution lay with the CPC and their evil system. She was the victim of the CPC's 'thought reform' targeting intellectuals. She said, 'Mao's abuse of intellectuals reached an unprecedented level of cruelty during the Cultural Revolution' (Cheng 1995[1986], 172). She defined herself as a patriotic intellectual who did nothing wrong to the country. It was only because of her 'class status [non-working class]' that she became an 'outcast' (Cheng 1995[1986], 87).

Explaining the reason why she chose to stay in China instead of migrating to the West before the founding of the PRC, she wrote,

One of the outstanding characteristics of educated Chinese of my generation was our keen sense of patriotism, born of our knowledge and experience of the outside world and our concern for China's comparative backwardness. We were acutely conscious of the fact that China's recent history was the record of a great civilization which had been in steady decline for a century. In fact, it was the naive belief that the Communist Revolution might provide China with the impetus for progress that led so many of us to remain in, or go back to, China around 1949 (Cheng 1995[1986], 254).

As she felt she had done nothing wrong but instead behaved as a typical Chinese intellectual, her 'disaster' was interpreted as an inescapable result of living in Communist China. The only regret was that she should have known the evils of Communism earlier. She wrote, 'How could I have failed to see the true nature of the Communist regime when I had read so many books on the Soviet Union under Stalin, I asked myself' (Cheng 1995[1986], 450). Mixed with the account of her suffering in the detention centre is her extensive political analysis of the CPC regime. These are far from objective. They are biased to the extent that all evils cognised in the West as being peculiar to Communism can be found in Communist China. Mao is exactly the person portrayed in Western anti-Mao tracts: a power-greedy dictator of a totalitarian regime, likened to an emperor of feudal China.

The reproaches to the CPC are dispersed through, and intertwined with, accounts of her personal experiences (see for example Cheng 1995[1986], 46, 49, 50, 53, 66, 82, 103, 115, 127, 162, 170, 172, 182–183, 186, 189, 191, 203, 208, 304, 375, 380, 441, 488, 489). She paints a comprehensive picture of the CPC through recounting her personal story, complemented with political interpretation. In doing so she provides an illustrative description of the CPC accessible to Western readers. As she explained, the only reason why Chinese intellectuals accepted the CPC state was because there was no other choice. After all, the Communist takeover in 1949 offered an ‘opportunity for peace and stability’ (Cheng 1995[1986], 21). Because the majority of the CPC members were lowly educated, their takeover resulted in the problem that intellectuals were led and administrated by officials with little education. Therefore, intellectuals were inevitably held in suspicion and forced to ‘reform’ their thought (Cheng 1995[1986], 22).

Nien Cheng repeatedly stresses her summation of the CPC: it is evil in nature. The narrative pattern is to extend accounts of her personal suffering to analysing CPC politics and then to conclude that the CPC is evil. For example, one night in 1966 in the detention house she heard a broadcast announcing Liu Shaoqi, Vice Chairman of the CPC, was expelled from the CPC and stripped of all his official positions. She thus moved her narration from discussing her physical problems to the CPC’s control of press, and then to the conclusion: this is the ugly nature of the CPC.

I concluded that the primary objective of the radical-controlled press was to frighten those who might sympathize with Liu Shao-chi[Shaoqi] and to silence them. Therefore, while the newspaper gave the impression that the whole nation hated Liu Shao-chi, *I knew* it was not

true, because long ago *I had learned* how to read the Communist press like so many of my fellow compatriots. Having lived in China since the Communist Party assumed power, *I knew* that probably most of the non-Party members of the country were indifferent because they had no special feelings for either Mao Tze-tung[Zedong] or Liu Shao-chi, while the Party members, except for a small group of Maoists, were doubtless embarrassed by this development, because *it exposed the ugly nature of Party politics* (Cheng 1995[1986], 191, my emphasis).

This passage exemplifies Nien Cheng's expressive style and her self-concept. The italicised phrases 'I concluded,' 'I knew,' 'I had learned' initiate her political analysis about conflict at the CPC's top on behalf of 'my fellow compatriots.' Nien Cheng presumes her personal experiences privileged her criticism about the 'ugly nature' of the CPC with authority. In the same way, she affirmed all the evils of the CPC as a stereotypical description for any Communist party: totalitarianism, hypocrisy, personality cult, tyranny, and so forth. All these evils were conclusively articulated based on Nien Cheng's interpretations of her own experiences and even from rumours.

To the populace, the CPC cultivated servile obedience through propaganda so as to preclude them from having a free will of their own. There was no freedom of religion and press. No law existed beyond the leadership of the CPC. Human rights were willfully infringed. To intellectuals, the CPC deceived and exploited them until they were rendered useless. Political campaigns were designed by the CPC to stir up mutual mistrust among the populace and hatred between family members. Bribery and corruption spread among the CPC officials at all levels. A power struggle within

the CPC hierarchy was natural and inevitable. Nien Cheng herself was ‘a victim of class struggle’ and ‘a victim of the [Communist] system’ (Cheng 1995[1986], 116, 354). Under the leadership of the CPC, China was poor, backward, and ugly, as shown in the film *Chung Kuo, Cina* shot by the Italian filmmaker, Michelangelo Antonioni in 1972 (Cheng 1995[1986], 116, 415–416). Chinese people were ‘demoralized,’ their isolation from the West was self-imposed and they were living in the ‘self-delusion’ of ‘racial arrogance’ (Cheng 1995[1986], 149, 162). As for portraying Mao, she recounted:

Although I was tired because of lack of sleep, I was wide awake. My ankle was swollen and painful but I paced the cell restlessly in urgent strides, impatient to seek an encounter with the Maoists. The more I thought of what Mao Tze-tung [Zedong] was doing to me, to my friends and a multitude of other unknown fellow sufferers, the angrier I got. I swore I would hit back at the Maoists somehow (Cheng 1995[1986], 199).

In Nien Cheng’s eyes, Mao was a tyrant and dictator, and victimised the nation with his ‘symptoms of senile dementia,’ suspicion and paranoia, like other Communist leaders such as Stalin (Cheng 1995[1986], 53, 492). Nien Cheng wrote that Mao was ‘a hateful dictator who had killed millions of Chinese people and imprisoned more with his political campaigns and had several times brought the nation’s economy to the brink of ruin with his disastrous economic policy’ (Cheng 1995[1986], 186). Furthermore, she used rumours to paint Mao as a feudal emperor:

It was common knowledge that Mao Tze-tung [Zedong] himself lived in the former winter palace of the Ching [Qing] dynasty emperors and had an entourage of specially selected attractive young women for his personal attendants. He could order the Red Guards to tear up the constitution, beat people up and loot their homes and no one, not even other Party leaders, dared to oppose him (Cheng 1995[1986], 82).

And again, Cheng even furthered her depiction of Mao as follows:

Wang Tung-hing [Wang Dongxing, Mao's principal bodyguard during the Cultural Revolution] was a long-time bodyguard of Mao Tze-tung [Zedong] ... It was said that his most outstanding service to Mao was to bring to his master's attention an exceptionally beautiful woman, Chang Yu-fong [Zhang Yufeng] (Jade Phoenix), whom he placed on Mao's special train. She had become Mao's concubine and was given the official title of 'Secretary in charge of daily life'.

Chang Yu-fong was the last of a succession of young females who had shared Mao's bed. The Chinese people knew but never dared to talk about the fact that their 'Great Leader' was a womanizer. In his dotage, the self-styled successor of Marx and Lenin, and the symbol of progress and enlightenment, believed, as some Chinese Emperors had believed, that sexual liaison with young virgins enhanced the chance of longevity in an old man (Cheng 1995[1986], 441).

For Nien Cheng, there was nothing positive about China or its leaders. For her, living in China was torture. As she explained, the courage and strength that she gained for survival was from God and her intrinsic nature that she shared with all creatures on earth. It was nothing to do with Chinese culture and tradition, although she claimed that she loved Chinese culture. Whenever she was on the verge of a physical or mental breakdown, God appeared. For example, 'I was not afraid. I believe in a just and merciful God, and I thought he would lead me out of the abyss' (Cheng 1995[1986], 120). From a spider crawling in her cell busy with the work of weaving its web, she was inspired with the meaning of life and gained courage to keep on living. It was also God's way of enlightening Nien Cheng. She wrote:

Whether God had made the spider or not, I thanked Him for what I had just seen. A miracle of life had been shown me. It helped me to see that God was in control. Mao Tze-tung and his Revolutionaries seemed much less menacing. I felt a renewal of hope and confidence (Cheng 1995[1986], 131).

Nien Cheng's account about her self shows little identification with Chinese culture. In the cell, she writes of Tang dynasty poetry. Unlike Ningkun Wu or many other intellectuals who obtained knowledge about the self and the meaning of life from traditional literature, Nien Cheng saw this only as a tool to keep her sanity while being detained. The resilience that Confucianist and Daoist intellectuals adopt in dealing with situations disadvantageous to survival was interpreted by Nien Cheng as being inapplicable to her:

‘[F]ighting was a positive action much more encouraging to the human spirit than merely enduring with patience, known as a virtue of the Chinese race. Many of my friends and acquaintances survived their ordeal during the Cultural Revolution by that virtue. But for me, only the positive stimulant of fighting buoyed up my spirits (Cheng 1995[1986], 188).

This demonstrates clearly that Nien Cheng had a clear understanding of Chinese culture’s influence on Chinese intellectuals, yet she firmly refused to identify with Chinese culture. Moreover, she was very clear that individualism could only find its place in the West: ‘The Communist Party was not very tolerant of individualists’(Cheng 1995[1986], 394), later adding, ‘The United States of America is the right place for me’ (Cheng 1995[1986], 488).

Nien Cheng’s self-privileged account and intensive concern about her material life demonstrates that she identified with Western notions of individual subjectivity and materialistic values. In contrast, Chinese intellectuals either self-identified with Confucianism and/or Daoism, and do not include the pursuit of contentment in material life within the frame of their self-identification. The accounts of their lives and selves is narrated around their contributions to the country in the various ways of a Chinese intellectual. Nien Cheng focused on her material life. It might be inferred that her self-identification with the West commenced when her comfortable life was interrupted. She did not express any dissatisfaction towards her pre-1966 life. Suffering from the loss of familiar and indulgent comforts drove her to seek solace in, and identify with, the West, and to the rejection of Chinese cultural values. Consequently, she found nothing agreeable in China, not even her

brother because he behaved in the same way as other Chinese Confucian intellectuals (Cheng 1995[1986], 272–273).

Nien Cheng's exhaustive listing of the CPC's ostensible evils makes her narrative more akin to a political text than a personal account. But her privileging of the self—where she is heroine, narrator, and author—renders her autobiography accessible to Western readers. Nevertheless, despite identifying with Western values, the legacy of the Chinese autobiographical tradition is still evident. To a certain degree it can be argued that she followed the method of *Chunqiu*-style. All that she recounted in her narrative was to express the 'Way,' which, for her, was for China to adopt Western liberal values in order to realise China's bright future.

Dong Zhujun, the author of *My Centurial Life* (2008[1997]) serves as a good comparison with Nien Cheng, as both enjoyed comfortable material conditions in Shanghai and experienced imprisonment for the wrongful accusation of being a 'spy' during the Cultural Revolution. Dong Zhujun's text narrates her life spanning almost one hundred years, as her book was published when she was ninety-seven years of age. Dong Zhujun was born in 1900 in Shanghai, five years earlier than Nien Cheng. Dong Zhujun recounted her personal struggle in the turbulent period of China at war and her efforts in the construction of the new China. In 1935 she established her own business, Jinjiang Restaurant. It soon became the most prestigious restaurant in Shanghai. She sincerely supported the mission of the CPC and donated her business to the PRC state. It is today's Shanghai Jinjiang Hotel, one of the best hotels in Shanghai. Accused in 1967 of being a 'spy,' 'traitor,' 'double-faced dealer,' and so on, she was thrown into prison for five years (Dong 2008[1997], 444–522). In spite of similar suffering and enjoying a similar living standard to Nien Cheng, Dong Zhujun did not hanker for Western material values nor make herself the subject of

her narrative. Rather, the main focus is on describing the events in which she was enmeshed. It is a subtle distinction, and one that emerges through particular narrative styles, but it is a crucial distinction nevertheless.

Summary

Ningkun Wu and Nien Cheng's autobiographies portray their lives under the CPC's 'thought reform.' They construct their lives so as to portray a sense of victimised selves. Both texts blame lack of freedom of speech and infringement of human rights in China on the rule of the CPC. Nien Cheng's denouncements of the CPC and Mao are harsh and comprehensive. All the evils which Ningkun Wu and Nien Cheng complain of fall into the prevalent concept of Communism among anti-Communist Westerners. This might reflect the anti-Communist legacy of Cold War thinking which prevailed during the 1980s and 1990s. Writing in this context—as they were for both were domiciled in the West when they wrote their autobiographies—meant exposure to this influence. There were plenty of ready crimes formulated by Western critics for Communist regimes. Combined with their experiences of suffering in Communist China, Nien Cheng and Ningkun Wu produced stories of intellectuals' victimisation under the CPC's 'thought reform.' However, there are also ample narratives pertaining to intellectuals' 'thought reform' tragedies in China written by China-based authors. These China-based intellectuals' texts demonstrate the authors' allegiance to the ideals of Confucian intellectuals. They commit themselves to Confucian self-realisations: 'establishing an example of virtue,' 'establishing successful service,' and 'establishing literary authority.' Therefore, besides the overarching characteristic of Chinese self-conception—identifying the self with the external material world—China-based intellectuals focus their accounts on their achievements in academia. Xu Yuanchong for example, a famous English–Chinese

translator, recalled that he was a constant target of ‘thought reform’ campaigns for being a leading translator, but he thought his academic achievement failed to justify such a ‘treatment.’ Therefore, he should work hard to improve his translating level so as to ‘deserve’ the ‘treatment’ (Xu 2011[1996], 3–4). His narrative does not recount his experience of ‘thought reform’ but focuses on the stories concerning himself and his friends pertaining to the profession of translation. As he stated in the introductory chapter, the most memorable things were others’ stories, which made it true that others’ biographies constituted his autobiography (Xu 2011[1996], 3–4). This example precisely reflects how China-based intellectuals perceive themselves in relation to others.

As for Ningkun Wu and Nien Cheng, they were apparently unwilling to continue identifying with the self-concept of the Chinese intellectual, though they differ in degree. Ningkun Wu chose to narrate trauma in reference to English literature, with Hamlet as the representative. In doing so, he found himself missing in that narration. He therefore turned to Chinese literary and cultural traditions to inquire into his self and life. Thus, he concluded: ‘I came, I suffered, I survived’ (Wu and Li 1993, 365). Nien Cheng chose to give up identifying her self with Chinese culture and cut off connections with China, including with her brother. And her account demonstrates a clear inclination to the Western concept of the individual self. But as symbolised by her favourite *qipao* dress, her self is tailored according to the West. Nevertheless, her innermost part still harbours some Confucian elements, as revealed by her self-expression, which remains within the tradition of Chinese autobiography, where the self is expressed through broader social affiliations and contexts.

Chapter Three

A generation growing up during the Cultural Revolution

As mentioned in the ‘Introduction,’ the texts which constitute the ‘literature of the wounded’ that emerged during the 1980s and 1990s in the West are categorised into two clusters: intellectuals’ texts and the ‘Cultural Revolution generation’ texts. Intellectuals’ texts have been discussed in the previous chapter. From this chapter on, the Cultural Revolution generation’s texts will be considered. Nine texts, including *Wild Swans*, *Spider Eaters*, and *Red Azalea* (see the other six texts in Appendix 1) are selected as exemplars of the Cultural Revolution generation’s life-writings pertaining to that generation’s experience of growing up, particularly during the period of the Cultural Revolution. Before reading these specific texts, we need to learn about the historical moment from which these authors emerged. This chapter will focus on this aspect.

The authors who were born around the PRC’s founding year, 1949, and who grew up during the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976) are categorised as being part of the ‘Cultural Revolution generation’ because of the momentous nature of Chinese history in that period. Considering them as belonging to a generation called the ‘Cultural Revolution generation’ is grounded in the sociological definition of ‘generation.’ The term ‘generation’ refers to an age cohort but stresses that they share historical, social, and subjective experiences. The German philosopher Wilhelm Dilthey (1833–1911) stressed the roles that social and historical factors played in forming a person’s self-understanding. The French philosopher Auguste Comte (1798–1857) stressed the role of similar subjective experiences in the shaping of a generation (Bonnin 2006; 2013; Sausmikat 2003). And the sociologist Karl

Mannheim (1893–1947) combined these two considerations. Hence, he defined ‘generation’ as a social cohort emerging from ‘a common location in the social and historical process,’ from which they are predisposed to certain modes of behaviour, feeling, and thought endowed in historically relevant actions (Mannheim 1952, 291).

The authors of the nine texts selected were all born in the 1950s and grew up in the PRC during the Cultural Revolution. They left China for Western countries in the late 1970s or early 1980s. Given the era they lived through, their experiences have been deeply imprinted with the influences of the major sociopolitical changes that happened during the first thirty years of the PRC. Their generation is the first generation of the PRC. They witnessed and experienced the development of the PRC through the era of socialist construction from 1949 to 1966, then the decade of the Cultural Revolution from 1966 to 1976, and then the era of ‘Reform and Opening-up’ from 1979 onwards. By the end of 1999, significant social changes had taken place in the PRC. These changes not only mapped the life experiences of the Cultural Revolution generation but also shaped their understanding of life and their selves. For Western readers, it is because of these authors’ particular growing-up experiences that their life-writings are widely read as reliable sources of knowledge about Communist China and the Chinese. Therefore, discussing these texts authored by the members of the Cultural Revolution generation starts with an investigation into their upbringing.

Living early lives in the PRC

Children of the new China

Being the first cohort born after the founding of the PRC, members of the Cultural Revolution generation were considered to be the luckiest generation in modern Chinese history. As Rae Yang, author of *Spider Eaters: A Memoir*, wrote, ‘we were

the most fortunate, because we were born in new China and grew up under the red flag’ (Yang 1997, 9). Rae Yang’s definitive statement reflects the prevailing perception of this generation. It also reflects national pride in the historical accomplishment of reunifying the country and national confidence in the socialist system. The success of the CPC enabled the nation to live in peace and with dignity for the first time in a century. The birth of the first generation was indeed lucky in many ways, compared with their elder generations who grew up during the time when China was a the semi-feudal and semi-colonial state. In the eyes of elder generations, this lucky generation was the first successor of the cause of constructing a powerful and egalitarian socialist PRC. Born and living in a peaceful China, this generation was assumed by the CPC to learn the history of old China, the CPC’s exploits in establishing the PRC and Communist ideals before they became qualified successors. Thus so-called ‘socialist education’ was undertaken across the country.

Activities such as reading heroic stories of the older generations, especially stories of Communists’ sacrifice in the cause of establishing the new China, and participating in collective activities so as to nurture collectivistic awareness and thought were the common forms constituting the CPC’s socialist ideological propaganda. At schools, cultivating socialist collectivism was the most important component of the curriculum. Individual self-realisation was directly tied to the socialist cause. Individual relationships with society in the Confucian tradition were confirmed and highlighted, and privileged over kinship relationships (Law 2016, 41–43). By the 1960s, socialist ideological cultivation was considered critically important for constructing socialism (see Murphy and Johnson 2009, 447; Steiner 1958). Students were expected to be ‘labourers possessing a socialist consciousness and culture’ (Law 2016, 42). Socialist ideological and political lessons were taught at

schools. Role models were created. For example, Lei Feng was highly praised and set as an example by Mao for his loyalty to the CPC and sincerity in serving the people. ‘Learning from Comrade Lei Feng’ was a mass campaign of ‘doing good deeds for others for free.’¹² In today’s view, it is a campaign of volunteering service underpinned with socialist ideology. In socialist education, the ideological doctrine was intensified. Self-sacrifice and devotion to the socialist cause were emphasised as the virtues of socialist individuals (Law 2016, 42–43). Immersed in socialist education, members of this first generation of the PRC learned to perceive themselves as socialist successors, and it was this context that formed their self-understanding. Without any ‘direct knowledge or experience of any political system other than that of the People’s Republic’ (Yahuda 1979, 794), they were convinced that their contributions were crucially important in realising the ideal of a prosperous, powerful, and hyper-egalitarian socialist China.

However, in contrast to the idealist vision of egalitarian socialist China were the realities of uneven economic development and giant gaps between urban and rural areas, and the uneven distribution of social services and wealth such as in educational resources and material living conditions. Generally, urban dwellers possessed more social resources than peasants living in the countryside. Even urban dwellers were not equal due to different occupations and social status. Social inequalities were identifiable from the difference between schools and between schoolchildren. In the best schools, the majority of students were from official

¹² Lei Feng (1940–1962) was orphaned at a young age before the founding of the PRC. His father was killed by the Japanese invaders, his elder brother died from unaffordable medical treatment, his younger brother starved to death, and his mother was raped by the landlord and then killed herself. After the foundation of the PRC, he was provided with an education and a decent life. He became a soldier of the Chinese People’s Liberation Army in 1960, and died in 1962 in an accident. As he was set up as a model communist soldier for socialist propaganda during the 1960s, the accounts of his life are disputed. However, the apolitical virtues that Lei Feng presented are still worshipped in Chinese society. He is now remembered as an icon representing selflessness, modesty, earnestness, and helpfulness. For relevant study, see Wendy Larson. 2009. *From Ah Q to Lei Feng: Feud and Revolutionary Spirit in 20th Century China*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

families and intellectual families (see for example Kwong 1988, 50). Their excellent academic performance and access to intangible advantages derived from family backgrounds distinguished them from those from worker or peasant families. Students from official families generally had better material living conditions than students from worker families and peasant families, if not significantly better than students from intellectual families. Besides material and academic advantages, many students from official families presented themselves as having an innate sense of political superiority to students from intellectual families and others. These differences were caused by the allocation system adopted in the early years of the PRC, when materials were in severe shortage due to the poor economy. Food and other supplies were rationed to urban citizens. Governmental officials were rationed with food and housing in accordance with their official rank. High-ranking officials worked in compounds and their families were housed in the same compounds. Given the guaranteed ration enjoyed by dwellers of governmental compounds, living in a government compound became a manifestation of political status. Many government compounds provided self-sufficient living conditions for the residents. Facilities such as a canteen, grocery store, and even theatre were provided. Compared with ordinary working families, people living in government compounds enjoyed not only political advantages but also better material lives.

Specifically with respect to the nine authors whose texts are considered here, they were all urban dwellers. Among them Jung Chang, Zhai Zhenhua, Rae Yang, and Zhu Xiao Di¹³ were from official families housed in government compounds. Liang Heng, Zi-ping Luo, and Anchee Min were from intellectual families. Their parents were intellectuals. Ting-xing Ye was the only one from a capitalist family.

¹³ 'Zhu' is his surname. 'Xiao Di' is the given name. The author originally capitalised all initial letters of his name. Here they remain unchanged.

Her father was a deceased factory owner. These nine authors coincidentally stressed their family backgrounds and linked their experiences during the Cultural Revolution to their families' social status to indicate the influences of their familial origins on their growth.

From Red Guards to educated youths

By the start of the Cultural Revolution in 1966, the first generation of the PRC had been immersed in socialist ideological propaganda and education for seventeen years. Collectivistic values rooted in Confucian societies had been ideologicalised in compliance with the CPC's socialist ideal. Traditional Confucian collectivistic values were articulated into the moralities of socialist individuals such as self-sacrifice and devotion to the cause of building a powerful socialist China. Building socialism in China had become the nation's primary ambition. Firmly believing in the CPC's leadership and Mao's authority, and appealing to the bright vision, when the Cultural Revolution was launched millions of middle school students responded actively to the call of 'root[ing] out Party infiltrators, allegedly intent on subverting socialism' (Cherrington 1997, 307).

The Cultural Revolution that spanned the years 1966 to 1976 was not a single event but comprised a chain of related events. As for members of the Cultural Revolution generation, the Red Guard movement and the rustication movement were two influential events in their lives.¹⁴ The Red Guard movement was officially defined as the movement that started in May 1966 and ended in April 1969. The CPC official document named the 'May 16 Circular of 1966'¹⁵ marked the beginning of

¹⁴ For the Chinese official records of the Cultural Revolution, see 'Wenhua da geming' (The Cultural Revolution 文化大革命). http://news.xinhuanet.com/ziliao/2003-01/20/content_697889.htm. Retrieved on 15 October 2015.

¹⁵ See 'Circular of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution.' 16 May 1966. https://www.marxists.org/subject/china/documents/cpc/cc_gpcr.htm. Retrieved on 27 September 2016.

the Cultural Revolution. It declared that there was a necessity to ‘re-establish proletarian and revolutionary spirit’ across the nation (Xun 1995, 1–2). As a response, the masses were mobilised to ‘expose the reactionary bourgeois stand’ and ‘repudiate the reactionary bourgeois ideas in the sphere of academic work, education, journalism, literature and art, and publishing, and seize the leadership in these cultural spheres’ (see the ‘May 16 Circular of 1966’).

Students from junior and senior schools were the first people who took ‘revolutionary’ actions. They created their own organisations and designated themselves ‘Red Guards,’ pledging to guard the CPC and Chairman Mao (Kwong 1988, 30; Yang 2016, 99). They zealously ignited activities such as producing ‘big-character’ wall posters publicly criticising ‘bourgeois’ teachers, destroying the ‘Four Olds,’ these being old ideas, old culture, old customs, and old habits (MacFarquhar and Fairbank 1991, 144). Since there were no official criteria for what was regarded as ‘olds’ to be denounced or destroyed, students targeted whatever they considered to bear evidence of ‘olds’ and ‘bourgeois’ cultures. They burned books and/or changed assumed ‘non-revolutionary’ names, for example personal names and names of streets and stores, into ‘revolutionary’ names to show their loyalty to the state, the CPC and Chairman Mao. In the name of destroying the ‘Four Olds,’ radical Red Guards destroyed much cultural heritage. Also in the name of smashing the ‘Four Olds,’ Red Guards ransacked the houses of ‘capitalists.’ This then progressed to the denunciation, humiliation, and beating of ‘capitalists’ and teachers in public, which caused injuries and deaths (see Kwong 1988, 24–38). In a short while, the ‘revolutionary and radical claims of the masses (especially students) were increasingly extended to include the challenging of executive and administrative authorities’ (Xun 1995, 2). In order to prevent Red Guards from becoming even

more radical and brutal, the government sent work teams to schools to restrain their radically destructive actions but not to destroy their ‘revolutionary’ passion. And then the Red Guards started a new form of ‘revolutionary’ act called the ‘Great Link-up.’

Claiming to exchange ‘revolutionary’ experiences and to get inspected by Chairman Mao in person in Beijing, Red Guards travelled freely and without charge around the country—this was named the ‘Great Link-up’ (Yang 2000, 388–390). All levels of government were required to provide Red Guards with transportation and accommodation for free. With such convenience and governmental support, Red Guards displayed ‘a fascination with tourism, as well as a genuine seriousness in carrying out the revolution’ (Yang 2000, 390). Meanwhile, Red Guard organisations in many cities and towns expanded rapidly and grew increasingly violent and anarchic. Some Red Guard organisations ‘had expanded too rapidly, grown too powerful, and become an independent political force’ (Yang 2000, 390). Personal interpretations of the CPC’s politics mixed with individuals’ personal pursuits led to fierce factional fights between Red Guard organisations (Kwong 1988, 49–52). In order to prevent the chaotic situation from getting worse, the government issued ‘a series of official notices banning nationwide Red Guard organizations in the early months of 1967’ (Yang 2000, 390). In July 1968, the government selected representative workers from factories to form ‘Workers Propaganda Teams’ and sent them to schools to suppress factional fighting (Yang 2000, 389). In October 1968 the ‘Revolutionary Committee’ was established, composed of representatives selected from the so-called revolutionary cadres, armed forces, and revolutionary masses.¹⁶ They took charge of schools and rigidly constrained the violence and turbulence of

¹⁶ See ‘Unprecedentedly Excellent Situation in China’s Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution’ in *Peking Review* Vol. 43. 25 October 1968: 21.

the Red Guards. Only in this way did the Red Guard movement draw to an end. But for a while schools remained closed. During this period Red Guards conducted an idle life free from teachers' supervision, and from parental supervision because their parents were busy with work.

The Ninth National Congress of the CPC was held on 1 April 1969. At this meeting the CPC declared that the Cultural Revolution had achieved a decisive victory and entered a new stage: 'struggle–criticism–transformation.' The specific tasks for the struggle–criticism–transformation stage included transforming administration, intellectuals, and education.¹⁷ Cadres, intellectuals, and middle school students were mobilised and organised to undertake re-education through manual work in the countryside. Red Guard organisations were thereby dissolved. Middle school graduates eligible according to relevant policies were mobilised to move from urban homes to rural areas to receive re-education from peasants through farming work. It was also assumed that urban 'educated youths' moving from cities to the countryside would bring knowledge from cities to the countryside. Therefore, these urban youths were called *zhiqing* ('educated youths' 知青). This rustication migration campaign was named 'up to the mountains, down to the countryside.' It is estimated that more than ten million urban youths were rusticated during the decade of the Cultural Revolution (Bernstein 1977; Bonnin 2013; Gu and Ma 1996; Liu 1998).¹⁸

¹⁷ See Lin Biao, 'Report to the Ninth National Congress of the Communist Party of China'. *Peking Review* Vol.18. 30 April 1969:26.

¹⁸ In response to the call of the 'Up to the Mountains and Down to the Countryside' movement made by the Chinese government at the end of 1968, urban secondary school graduates volunteered or were coerced to leave urban cities and live and work in rural areas. They were called 'educated youths.' For more information, see Bernstein, Thomas P. 1977. *Up to the Mountains and Down to the Villages: The Transfer of Youth from Urban to Rural China* New Haven: Yale University Press; Seybolt, Peter J. (ed.) 1977. *The Rustication of Urban Youth in China*. New York: M.E. Sharpe, Inc.; Bonnin, Michel. 2013. *The Lost Generation: The Rustication of China's Educated Youth (1968–1980)* Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press; Gu, Hongzhang 顾洪章 & Ma Kesen 马克森 (eds) 1996. *Zhongguo zhishi qingnian shangshanxiang dashi ji (The Chronicle of Chinese*

Among the nine authors concerned here, Zi-ping Luo, Anchee Min, and Ting-xing Ye were Shanghai citizens. Zi-ping Luo was allowed to stay in Shanghai to take care of her sick father and younger brother. Anchee Min and Ting-xing Ye went down to the countryside. Most Shanghai youths were relocated in neighbouring provinces such as Zhejiang and Jiangsu, or poor and backward provinces such as Anhui, Inner Mongolia, and Gansu, or military production farms in frontier areas in the provinces such as Heilongjiang, Xinjiang, and Yunnan. Relatively, the neighbouring provinces had more advantages in terms of distance and living conditions. For Shanghai youths, the ‘more fortunate’ were those who were assigned to places ‘within Jiangsu province or the outlying suburbs of Shanghai’ (McLaren 1979, 1). Therefore, Anchee Min and Ting-xing Ye can be considered to belong to the lucky ones who were sent to Jiangsu province, the closest neighbour of Shanghai. The places receiving Beijing youths were mainly in the underdeveloped provinces of Inner Mongolia, Heilongjiang, Shaanxi, and Shanxi, to the north, northeast, or west of Beijing. Zhai Zhenhua and Rae Yang were two Beijing youths. Zhai Zhenhua went to Shaanxi province, which received many Beijing youths. Because it had been the headquarters of the CPC during the 1930s, it was rich in revolutionary significance and thus an ideal place for re-educating urban youths. Rae Yang volunteered to relocate to the coldest and toughest area in Heilongjiang province, called the Great Northern Wilderness. This region has now become one of main grain-producing areas of China, to which ‘educated youths’ made great contributions. Liang Heng, the youngest child of his family, accompanied his father who was sent down for re-education in the countryside. Among these nine authors, Gao Yuan was the only one who joined the army in 1969 as soon as he graduated from middle

Educated Youths' 'Going up to the Mountains and Down to the Countryside' 中国知识青年上山下乡大事记). Beijing 北京: Zhongguo jiancha chubanshe 中国检察出版社.

school. He did not go down to the countryside as an ‘educated youth.’ Zhu Xiao Di was too young to be sent down. He stayed at home during the rustication movement. Jung Chang left the city of Chengdu for the countryside nearby in 1969, staying there intermittently. She was recruited into a factory situated in Chengdu and returned to the city.

The return of ‘educated youths’ to their home cities started in the early 1970s mainly by means of getting a job in a factory located in the city, as Jung Chang did, or being recommended to go to university, as were Zhai Zhenhua and Ting-xing Ye. Youths working in the countryside and factories, or serving in the army, who were recommended to universities were called *gongnongbing* college students (‘worker–peasant–soldier’ college students). The qualification for being recommended to attend university was determined according to academic as well as political performance. In most cases, elements such as a family’s political status, loyalty to the state, and working attitude and performance were more stressed than academic performance and personal vigour (Deng and Treiman 1997; Yu, Stith, Liu, and Chen 2012, 14). Except for Anchee Min, who did not go to university in China, the other eight authors were all *gongnongbing* college students and became the first cohort of university graduates in the post-Cultural Revolution era. Compared with the majority of ‘educated youths’ who stayed in the countryside for quite a long time, these authors were among the lucky members of the Cultural Revolution generation. For the majority of ‘educated youths’, only after the government officially brought the rustication movement to a close in 1980 did they return to home cities without limitations (Gold 1980; Gu and Ma 1996).

Immigrants of the Reform era

The ending of the Cultural Revolution marked a move away from Mao's to Deng Xiaoping's era. The policies of 'Reform and Opening-up' were adopted in the 1978 conference of the CPC.¹⁹ In accordance with the 'opening-up' policy, new regulations and laws regarding internal and international migration were introduced (Liu 2009, 315; Xiang 2016, 10). Foreign travel was 'firstly recognized as a legitimate right of citizens in China' (Liu 2009, 315). In 1985, specific legal articles were promulgated to safeguard the rights and interests of Chinese citizens with respect to their exit from and entry into China, and to promote international exchange (Liu 2009, 317). People going abroad in the 1980s primarily did so under the auspices of the government. With increasing economic development, the 1990s saw an increasing number of self-funded immigrants. This formed the first wave of significant immigration in the history of the PRC (Iredale and Guo 2015, 4; Schwarcz 1986/1987; Xiang and Shen 2009). The primary agenda of this 'opening-up' was to learn advanced science and technology from Western industrialised countries so as to speed up China's modernisation. For this purpose, the Chinese government paid great emphasis on promoting education and intellectual development. Government-funded studying abroad was organised and self-funded studying was encouraged. The dominant receiving countries prior to the founding of the PRC, the US, UK, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, were still the main destinations.

On 26 December 1978, the first group of fifty-two Chinese scholars arrived in the US for academic studies. It was evidence of the implementation of China's

¹⁹ The 'Reform and Opening-up' policy was adopted in the 3rd Plenary Session of the CPC (Communist Party of China) 11th Central Committee, held at the end of 1978. For the official document, see <http://cpc.people.com.cn/GB/64162/64168/64563/65371/4441902.html>. Retrieved on 21 September 2016.

‘opening-up’ policy and the normalisation of diplomatic relations with the US.²⁰ Since then the educational exchange program in China has been expanded dramatically. Between September 1978 and the end of 1981, China sponsored 10,356 Chinese students to pursue overseas education in the US, the Federal Republic of Germany, Japan, the UK, France, Canada, Australia and other developed Western countries (Yang, Huang, and Zhang 2014). The US was the primary destination. Until 1986, about 50,000 US visas were issued to Chinese students and scholars. A great number of them were sponsored by the Chinese government. This shows that ‘government-sponsored students took the lion’s share of the opportunities of studying in the U.S.’ (He, Tian, and Deng 2011, 565).

Jung Chang went to the UK for graduate study on a Chinese government scholarship in 1978. Zhai Zhenhua went to Canada in 1980 sponsored by the Chinese government. At the initial stage of economic reform, the Chinese government played the main role in sponsoring students going abroad. A limited number of students and scholars were able to get a government scholarship for studying abroad. With the progress of the ‘Reform and Opening-up’ policy, self-financed studying abroad gradually became the dominant form of overseas study. In 1986, the restrictions on self-sponsored students were loosened. Since then, going abroad has become easier for ordinary people. The number of self-sponsored students gradually surpassed the number of government-sponsored students (He, Tian, and Deng 2011, 565). According to Yao Shuping’s study of Chinese student immigration, the student immigrants of the 1980s and 1990s formed the ninth wave in the history of Chinese

²⁰ See ‘China’s Decision To Send Students To U.S. A Surprise,’ 10.B—*Sarasota Herald-Tribune Sunday*, August 27, 1978; ‘Part 12 of the Series Overview of “Science and Technology Changing China” in the Thirty Years Since the Reform and Opening-Up’ 改革开放 30 年‘科技改变中国’系列报告之十二. http://www.most.gov.cn/ztl/jnkjggfz30/jnkjggfz30zx/200902/t20090201_67011.htm. Retrieved on 24 April 2016; ‘The First Scholars for Further Education in the United States Arrived in the Washington, D.C. on 27th December 1978’ 1978 年 12 月 27 日我国第一批赴美国进修学者抵达华盛顿 <http://www.people.com.cn/GB/historic/1227/5520.html>. Retrieved on 24 April 2016.

student immigration (Yao 2015). Ziping Luo probably went to the US on her own funding in 1983. Anchee Min was self-sponsored. Liang Heng and Gao Yuan married Americans and went to the US in 1981 and in 1982 respectively. Zhu Xiaodi was admitted to a graduate school in the US and went there in 1987.

Becoming a ‘thinking generation’ of the PRC

The above visit to the life of the Cultural Revolution generation demonstrates that the sociopolitical changes of the PRC during the first thirty years significantly shaped this generation’s life experience. More than that, along with the vicissitudes of society and their life was the changes to their self-understandings. Firstly, they were cultivated by socialist ideological education in the first seventeen years of the PRC, and then participated in the Red Guard movement or/and the rustication movement. Lastly, they stepped into the era of ‘Reform and Opening-up.’ At the inaugural stage of the Cultural Revolution, students as a whole were authorised to expose anti-socialist thoughts and actions so as to preserve the supposed purity of socialism. The sudden trust offered by the government gave this generation their first sense of adulthood. For the first time they seriously realised their lives were directly linked to the fate of the country and they were allowed opportunities to apply socialist ideals that they were indoctrinated into practising. As soon as the Cultural Revolution started, they immediately went into action. Red Guard organisations quickly emerged among small groups of secondary school students. They gained the government’s support and hence political legitimacy, and later developed into a political force (Kwong 1988, 24–38). In a short time their actions ‘evolved into widespread collective challenges against all sorts of authorities’ (Yang 2000, 387).

Soon their authority was constrained and suppressed by the government. When the state did not support them as before, once-active Red Guards became

dispirited and confused about their roles in the Cultural Revolution. Later, former Red Guards were 'sent down' to the countryside to receive re-education from peasants, though they were also trusted to be able to bring knowledge to the peasants. When they moved out of their home cities and took residence in the countryside, their lifestyle changed from that of a student, comfortable, dependent and living in the city, to a harsh, independent working life in the countryside. Those sudden changes and physical and mental frustrations drove them to conduct deeper and more serious reflections of their selves: whether to continue identifying the self with self-sacrifice to the socialist cause called on by the government, or to turn to seeking individual benefits. The first choice meant choosing to stay in the countryside and enduring low standards of living. The second choice meant betraying the government and their former aspiration and ambition to contribute all of the self to the cause of building an idealistic socialist China. Evidently and eventually, many 'educated youths' chose to identify the self with personal interests. The years following the end of the Cultural Revolution saw 'educated youths' try every means to leave the countryside for cities. Apparently, their socialist idealism had evaporated with their disillusionment with the government. As outlined by Yibing Huang in his criticism of the Cultural Revolution generation's literature, the Cultural Revolution generation's self experienced 'initiation—the Red Guard rebellion; wandering in the world—the so-called revolutionary exchanges (*geming da chuanlian*); reeducation—the sent-down or rustication movement (*shangsha xiexiang*); and disillusionment—the increasing doubt about the Cultural Revolution and Maoism' (Huang 2007, 9).

The subsequent change of the self of this generation was furthered by the adoption of the 'Reform and Opening-up' policy. The previous radical politics of the Cultural Revolution were negated and economic construction was stressed. Opening

the door to the West meant embracing Western free market economics and the underpinning theories such as materialism and consumerism. Notions concerning the self and the relations between the individual and the collective that are shaped by Western individualism were also introduced to China. The negation of the Cultural Revolution led to socialist collectivistic values being thought of as dated. The utopian ideal of egalitarian socialism waned into disillusionment. By the 1990s chasing wealth had become justified as a social force driving the advance of the country. In the face of the social problems brought about by the spread of materialism and individualism in China, the Cultural Revolution generation began to introspect about their selves before and after the Reform era. Nostalgia for their past spiritual life, filled with idealism and collectivism, arose among the Chinese of the Cultural Revolution generation. Such nostalgic emotions are widely expressed in the literature of ‘educated youths’ that emerged in the 1990s in China as well as in other forms of art (see for example Donald 2015).

In summary, this generation as a whole experienced idealism and disillusionment in political life and significant changes in their material life because of the Cultural Revolution (Bonnin 2006; Chan 1985; Cherrington 1997, 307; Yahuda 1979). Laifong Leung, a literary critic specialising in contemporary Chinese literature, portrays an emotional picture of the Cultural Revolution generation in her book *Morning Sun: Interviews with Chinese Writers of the Lost Generation* (Leung 1994). This generation ‘moved from Maoist frenzy toward disillusion and cynicism, feeling abandoned and deceived by a morally deteriorating party and the unattainable ideals of Chinese communism’ (Helmut Martin, quoted in Leung 1994). Leung argued, ‘Whatever they went through, their tumultuous physical and mental experiences had ironically and eventually transformed them from naïve, fanatical

Maoists to pragmatic, critical individuals who had gained a deeper understanding of the CPC's repressive rule and China's hard reality' (Leung 1994, xxix).

Additionally, this generation further experienced challenges caused by the social transformation of the Reform era. As Yixin Chen states:

No generation in the People's Republic suffered more misfortunes than the Red Guards generation. In childhood they experienced the great famine of 1959–1961; in adolescence they endured the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976) which closed schools and sent them to the countryside; in their twenties they were told to defer marrying and to have one child only when they did marry; in their thirties they were denied opportunities of career promotion because they lacked the college diplomas recently required; in their forties many of them were suddenly laid off by their employers. The generation before them endured Mao's political campaigns in the 1950s and 60s, but they at least benefited from some the Maoist socialism, enjoying secure jobs and free health care. The generation after them has grown up with Deng Xiaoping's reform, having all the opportunities that this reform has created. The Red Guards generation benefited from neither Maoist socialism nor Dengist reform. Mao's revolution abandoned them, sweeping them out of urban centers; Deng's reform left them on the sidelines when China moved to embrace the market (Chen 1999, 219).

Social transformation from the Maoist stress on socialist ideology to Deng's stress on economic development, and from socialist planning economics to free market

economics loosened state control on Chinese sociopolitical life, freed ‘educated youths’ from the countryside and allowed them freedom of choice in their own lives. Material living conditions improved greatly in the Reform era. However, free market economics has also promoted individualism, and has aggravated extant social inequalities and created new inequalities.

The Cultural Revolution generation was exposed firstly to ‘the rosy picture of socialist China painted by state propaganda’ and then to ‘the gloomy reality of rural life of many Chinese, which entailed a lack of basic facilities, poor education, and dire poverty’ (Xu 2010, 143, 152). They became ‘skeptical of the Cultural Revolution and disillusioned with its ideology and values’ (Xu 2010, 152). But when they faced the rise of individualism in the Reform epoch, they became nostalgic for the Maoist era. Former ‘educated youths’ recalled the years spent in the countryside, full of collectivism and idealism (Chen 1999, 220, 222). This sense of nostalgia and its attached self-values are commonly expressed in Chinese literature by former ‘educated youths’ (Xu 2010; Yang 2003). As Stanley Rosen argued, ‘having witnessed the entire history of the PRC, this generation has certainly earned the right to speak, and their reflections reveal a great deal, both about the Cultural Revolution years and about current conditions’ (quoted in Jiang and Ashley 2000, xix). Thus, many scholars argue that the coercive experience of defining the self in accordance with the changes of state policies has turned this generation into a ‘thinking generation’ (see for example Chen 1999, 222; Xu 2010).

Chapter Four

The Cultural Revolution generation's texts: unified selves of heroes/heroines

Among the autobiographies published in the West in the 1980s–1990s pertaining to the Cultural Revolution, most were authored by members of the Cultural Revolution generation. The following texts discussed here are considered exemplars: *Son of the Revolution* (Liang Heng and Judith Shapiro), *Born Red* (Gao Yuan), *A Generation Lost* (Zi-ping Luo), *Wild Swans* (Jung Chang), *Red Flower of China* (Zhai Zhenhua), *Red Azalea* (Anchee Min), *Spider Eaters* (Rae Yang), *A Leaf in the Bitter Wind* (Ting-xing Ye), and *Thirty Years in a Red House* (Zhu Xiao Di) (see Appendix 1). These nine Western-based texts of the Cultural Revolution generation's life-writings share some characteristics which distinguish them from both diasporic Chinese intellectuals' autobiographies discussed in Chapter Two, and China-based self-narratives by those who also belong to the Cultural Revolution generation. The overarching feature of these nine texts is that they are formative stories of adulthood, read as *Bildungsroman* in the West (see for example Cafarella and Bohan 2012). This general feature and their Western reception suggest these texts follow conventional autobiographical format, not only in respect to chronological structure, but also in the conflation of hero/heroine, narrator, and author into a single tripartite identity.

According to Spengemann's notion of modern Western autobiography, autobiography is a convergence of three progressive forms respectively manifested by three loci of autobiographical being: self-perception signified by 'auto,' life by

‘bio,’ and literary expression by ‘graph’ (1980). In Don Grant’s words, the genre of autobiography is characterised by the tripartite identity: ‘the “I” who is simultaneously the central character of the story, the narrator of the tale, and the person writing it’ (Grant 1990, 312). In light of these theories about the genre of autobiography, these nine texts will be analysed from the three loci of autobiographical being to explore how the authors perceive themselves, how they recount their experiences, and how they express themselves literarily.

Given the large cluster—nine texts—to be considered, a comprehensive discussion cannot be accommodated in a single chapter. As a solution, the discussion will extend from this chapter to the following two chapters. This chapter focuses on how these nine authors perceive themselves. The next chapter—Chapter Five—examines how they narrated their lives. And Chapter Six discusses how they identify themselves literarily. The summary of this three-perspective discussion will be integrated into the ‘Conclusion’ of this thesis.

A rough comparison between Western-based self-narratives and China-based self-narratives both written by members of the Cultural Revolution generation reveals an apparent distinction. Western-based texts are commonly book-length narratives portraying the entirety of the heroes/heroines’ growth. China-based texts are commonly short stories or essays focusing on depicting the experience during a certain period of time, for example, Shi Tiesheng’s (1951–2010) *My Faraway Qingping Bay* (2001[1983]), Zhang Chengzhi’s (1948–) *Black Steed* (1990[1981]) and *Rivers of the North* (1984), and *Wasting and Rising: Fifty-five Educated Youths’ Life Stories* edited by He Shiping (1992). They are all accounts of the authors’ experiences during the period of the rustication movement working as ‘educated youths’ in the countryside. Book-length personal accounts are rare in China. Liang

Xiaosheng's (1949–) memoir *Monologue of a Red Guard* (2006[1987]) and Zhang Xincan's (ca. 1952–) *A Diary of a Red Adolescent Girl: A Red Guard's Spiritual Records, 1966–1971* (2003) display some characteristics associated with autobiography. Liang Xiaosheng refused to label his work an autobiography given his use of fictional devices, albeit to a limited degree. However, as he also stressed, all he recounted was what he experienced during the period of the Cultural Revolution (Liang 2006[1987], 2). Zhang Xincan's publication is the diary that she kept between 1966 and 1971. Despite the book-long length of Liang Xiaosheng and Zhang Xincan's narratives, they are accounts of certain experiences of the authors, showing no intention or awareness of mapping the process of adulthood formation. This fundamentally distinguishes China-based personal accounts from Western-based personal accounts and makes them disparate subgenres of autobiography.

Western-based texts structurally and thematically are constructed to unfold the entire, unified process of the authors' growth from childhood into adulthood. For this reason, Western-based personal accounts by the Cultural Revolution generation are read as *Bildungsroman* of this Chinese generation who grew up in the PRC. As exemplified by *Wild Swans*, *Spider Eaters* and the other seven texts discussed here, the growth of the hero/heroine is a lineal and unified process guaranteed by his or her innate personality that functions as the foundation, as well as the core value, determining the path of self-development. In other words, the individual is conceptualised as an entity with innate core values stably underpinning his or her self-development. With this concept of the self, autobiography traces the coherent and entire process of an individual's development from immaturity to maturity. The process is self-sufficiently rational, for it is under the guidance of the innate core quality of the self. Maturity is marked by the individual reaching conscious

awareness of his or her innate subjectivity. In this self-formative story, the transitive point from immaturity to maturity is stressed so that the dynamic and entire development from childhood to adulthood is portrayed. These features of *Bildungsroman* are exactly the embodiment of the Western concept of the self—an independent and self-determined individual with subjectivity privileged throughout one's life (Buckley 1974).

It is evident that the nine Western-based personal accounts authored by Liang Heng, Gao Yuan, Zi-ping Luo, Jung Chang, Zhai Zhenhua, Anchee Min, Rae Yang, Ting-xing Ye, and Zhu Xiao Di are constructed around the heroes/heroines' self-formation. The authors elaborately intertwined their maturation with the history of the Cultural Revolution and divided the course of self-development into three phases featuring three states of subjecthood respectively. The three phases/states generally fall into the pre-Cultural Revolution period, the period of the Red Guard movement and the rustication movement. In line with Wilhelm Dilthey and James Hardin's statements concerning *Bildungsroman* (Hardin 1991, xiii–xiv), the three phases/states of subjecthood are: firstly, the innate self marked by innate personalities; secondly, developing awareness of the self marked by practising subjecthood in social participations; and thirdly, attaining a mature realisation of the self and place in the world. The following part will detail the three states of subjecthood portrayed by these nine Western-based autobiographies.

Mapping the innate self before the Cultural Revolution

Although these nine texts narrate the authors' growth from childhood to adulthood,²¹ life during the decade of the Cultural Revolution dominates the narrative, while life prior to the Cultural Revolution is only briefly recounted. But despite the brevity of

²¹ Jung Chang's *Wild Swans: Three Daughters of China* (1993[1991]) comprises her autobiography and the biographies of her grandmother and mother.

the accounts prior to the Cultural Revolution, the author as hero-narrator is already evident. All the narrative included in this part is oriented towards articulating the authors' sense of individual selfhood and subjectivity. It summarises their personalities and ascribes their innate qualities to them. These innate personalities shaped their selves and defined their self-concepts. In line with the self-concepts, the balance of the narratives was organised and arranged so that the established self-concepts are retained throughout life. The account of life prior to the Cultural Revolution functions as the foundation for the subsequent portrayal of their life.

In this early part of the narrative, the nine authors provide clear portrayals of their selves prior to the Cultural Revolution. This retrospective reconstruction of early self-consciousness of one's unique subjecthood is characteristic of how the self is constructed in typical Western autobiographies. For example, all the authors, coincidentally, were all born with innate merits, which singled them out from their peers (see for example Liang and Shapiro 1983, 7, 39; Gao 1987, 30–32; Luo 1990, 9, 11, 14; Chang 1993[1991], 233, 238, 257–258, 276, 318–319, 332; Zhai 1992, 9, 12, 27, 32, 35, 43, 48; Min 1993, 20, 31; Yang 1997, 15, 38, 68, 70, 90; Ye 2000[1997], 42, 71–72, 74; Zhu 1998, 16, 20). They were quick at learning, talented at some specific skills, capable in many aspects, and had particular personalities. At home they were parents' favourites; at school they were teachers' pets. At the specific level, these nine authors had different highlights in their childhood lives. Approximately four groups of self-portrayals can be identified by similarities shared within the groups and distinctions between the groups. Liang Heng and Zhu Xiao Di's selves can be considered as one group, for their special traits are stressed. Zi-ping Luo, Anchee Min, and Ting-xing Ye are in a group, for they were particularly capable compared with their siblings. Gao Yuan, Rae Yang, and Zhai Zhenhua are in

another group, as they were born into official families and thus had political superiority. Finally, Jung Chang is distinctive because she particularly highlighted her innate individuality.

Liang Heng and Zhu Xiao Di were the youngest children in their families, and therefore they received the most family care and attention, which nurtured their superb physical and mental development. Liang Heng's text begins with the description of his successful escape from the surveillance of the kindergarten nurses to embrace freedom at the age of four (Liang and Shapiro 1983, 3–4). This episode portrays an agile four-year-old boy who appeals to freedom from discipline and had the courage to struggle for it. Zhu Xiao Di portrayed himself as a long-expected son of a senior high-ranked official father. Since his sister was ten years older, he lacked peer playmates and thereby spent most of his childhood with his father who was often busy attending municipal affairs with his colleagues at home (Zhu 1998, 15–17). The early exposure to political activities enriched his knowledge and hence made him a natural leader (Zhu 1998, 26).

Zi-ping Luo, Anchee Min, and Ting-xing Ye portrayed their young selves as naturally capable, and considerate children. They became their parents' helpful assistants. Although they were at a tender age, they were not only able to take care of themselves but also of their siblings. Moreover, they even offered help to their parents in dealing with political troubles. Zi-ping Luo was always her father's companion when he appealed to relevant institutes for his wrongful accusation of being a 'rightist' intellectual (Luo 1990, 5). She also emphasised that she was excellent at school courses by describing her classmates' jealousy of her outstanding performance (Luo 1990, 9). More than that, she was good at debating because of her gifted mastery of language (Luo 1990, 13–14, 75). Anchee Min became an 'adult' at

the age of five, taking care of her younger sisters and brothers. Therefore, she became a 'natural leader' at home and also at school (Min 1993, 13, 19, 20). She was capable enough to help her college-educated mother to draft her 'self-criticism' speech because her mother misspelt a word of a political slogan (Min 1993, 20). She displayed a brilliant talent in memorising and reciting, and singing operas at young ages. For example, she won a contest reciting Mao's quotations (Min 1993, 20–21). Ting-xing Ye displayed a strong character at an early age. She intuitively knew to struggle for her deserved status at home and at school. She fully understood that her parents valued boys more than girls. Therefore, she earned acclaim both at school and in her family by performing well academically and offering her mother great assistance in family affairs (Ye 2000[1997], 44–69). In the long-term self-struggle for self-esteem, she became combative, argumentative, and tenacious (Ye 2000[1997], 70, 105).

Gao Yuan, Zhai Zhenhua and Rae Yang's narratives focus more on their pursuit of elitism both intellectually and in respect to political development, for they were born into high-ranked official families. Gao Yuan was naturally a quiet, studious, and contemplative person, but he had no interest in politics. He was fond of, and good at, literary creation. His dream was to go to Beijing University, the most prestigious university in China (Gao 1987, 13, 22). Zhai Zhenhua, influenced by the revolutionary stories of her parents and other revolutionaries, was self-motivated to perform excellently both in academia and in socialist thought (Zhai 1992, 5–6). At home she was her mother's favourite because she was clever and sweet (Zhai 1992, 9). Little Rae Yang was a tomboy. She had a delightful and carefree childhood in Switzerland where her parents worked in the Chinese embassy, and later in Beijing in her grandmother's quadrangle courtyard. Her playmates were boy cousins, so she

was fond of playing boys' games. Her veteran Communist parents were too busy with work to take care of her personally. A nanny was hired for her, who devoted all her love and care on her (Yang 1997, 11–39). Deeply influenced by their Communist parents and socialist education at school, Zhai Zhenhua and Rae Yang were convinced that socialist idealism would be realised in China. Relatively, Gao Yuan was less passionate about politics.

Among these nine authors Jung Chang displayed the strongest sense of self as manifested by her prescriptive self-description. Following a *Bildungsroman* format, firstly, there is the mapping of the innate self, then practising this sense of self, through which Jung Chang achieves self-realisation. For Jung Chang, this mapping of the innate self began before her birth, for even her mother's pregnancy was propitious, thanks to the nutritious food and professional medical care given to her mother when she was pregnant with her (Chang 1993[1991], 234) Her 'good' birth bestowed Jung Chang with a strong and outgoing character that was both sensible and sensitive (Chang 1993[1991], 235, 238, 331). With this propitious start and carefully nurtured by her parents, she became a unique girl distinguished from others of her age (Chang 1993[1991], 338). In order to expound this self-definition, she listed her personality traits. For example, she developed independent thinking and cherished individuality. She enjoyed 'adult gatherings.' She liked 'nothing better than to be alone' with her books. And books that she preferred were those with a 'substantial amounts of words' rather than 'picture books,' which were normally children's favourites. She was so special that she was not only her parents' favourite but also popular with her parents' colleagues. Chang was praised as 'Little Diplomat.' She wrote:

I loved to toddle in and out of offices and play with the officials. I used to chase after them and call them by special names I invented for them, and recite nursery rhymes to them. Before I was three I was known as ‘Little Diplomat’ (Chang 1993[1991], 258).

Besides her innate sense of herself as special, she developed special habits from living in superior material conditions. For example, she formed a different habit from other children of eating candies. She stated, ‘When I had a sweet, I would never suck it, but bit into it and chewed it at once’ (Chang 1993[1991], 332). What this habit implied is that candies, which were precious in other children’s eyes, were nothing but common food in Jung Chang’s life. Benefiting from the political advantages attached to her parents’ official posts, she was able to attend the best primary school in Chengdu, capital city of Sichuan Province. At school she was treated specially because of her ‘fluent recitation of classical poems’ and her beautiful ‘calligraphy’ as well as her parents’ status as high-ranked officials (Chang 1993[1991], 318). In sum, Jung Chang is a child with the characteristics of intelligence, independent thinking, individual personality, and a sense of superiority. All these qualities portray her as a unique individual, distinguished from her peers.

Besides natural intelligence and individual merits, the authors also placed great emphasis on their parents’ political status as another source for defining their selves. In the later parts of their narratives, their respective political origins serve as distinguishing factors. Gao Yuan, Jung Chang, Zhai Zhenhua, Rae Yang, and Zhu Xiao Di were from official families. Their parents were all veteran Communists serving in the CPC government at different levels (Gao 1987, 6–9; Chang 1993[1991], 234, 240; Zhai 1992, 4–5; Yang 1997, 9–10, 50–52; Zhu 1998, 6–14).

But they vary in interpreting their advantages. For example, Gao Yuan was low-key in this respect. He explicitly expressed his dislike of political superiority granted by his father's high official rank. He rejected the political expectations of his teacher, for the teacher assumed that Gao Yuan should live up to the expectations of a son from a high-ranking official family. Given that his father was a honourable and beloved county head, it was expected that Gao Yuan would not shame his father in politics. But without any interest in politics at all, Gao Yuan considered such expectations to be a burden (Gao 1987, 23–25). In contrast, Jung Chang was very proud of herself as someone who naturally enjoyed superiority in politics and material wellbeing thanks to her parents' official privileges. She recounted her enviable living conditions and access to her father's exclusive privileges, such as chauffeur service and the special care given by her teachers (Chang 1993[1991], 280, 318–338). Zhai Zhenhua and Rae Yang's parents were high-ranking CPC officials too. But distinguished from Jung Chang and Gao Yuan, they showed more interest in aligning themselves with their parents' cause of building a socialist China, as indoctrinated in their homes and at school in the name of socialist education (Zhai 1992, 9, 14–16, 39; Yang 1997, 1–4, 52–53). It was their duty to continue the socialist cause that their fathers' generation was working towards. Imbued with socialist egalitarianism, Rae Yang instinctively sympathised with her classmates from poor families. Zhai Zhenhua believed that to be a qualified bearer of the socialist cause required constant progress in academia and politics. Thus, being a progressive person became the theme of her narrative and her self-portrayal. Zhu Xiao Di's father was a municipal leader, from whom he developed an interest in politics and became a natural leader.

Liang Heng, Zi-ping Luo, and Anchee Min were from intellectual families. They portrayed themselves as inferiors in politics (Liang and Shapiro 1983, 11-17; Luo 1990, 4-5; Min 1993, 14-23). Ting-xing Ye was from a capitalist family. She was not only politically inferior, but also financially impoverished. Additionally, she suffered more because girls were not valued in her family (Ye 2000[1997], 38-39, 44-45, 72). These four authors, who obtained no advantages from their parents' political status, generally put more stress on portraying their natural merits such as strong character, intelligence, and studiousness. On the other hand, the authors from official families described their elite political status in addition to their innate personal qualities. For all these authors, the construction of the childhood self in the early sections of their narratives influences how they recount their experiences during the Cultural Revolution.

Performing the self in the Red Guard movement

When the Cultural Revolution started in 1966, except for Zhu Xiao Di who was too young to be recruited, the other eight authors became involved in the Red Guard activities, to a greater or lesser extent. Anchee Min was only one year older than Zhu Xiao Di, but she writes of taking part in the Red Guard movement. According to her, although she was only at primary school, being an excellent student she was selected by the school principal to denounce her English teacher at the school criticism meeting (Min 1993, 30-40). As illuminated by Anchee Min, the authors who participated in the Red Guard movement did not change themselves in response to new external stimuli, but performed the self that had been established prior to the Cultural Revolution. Or more precisely, they exhibited their merits and personalities in the Red Guard movement.

The Red Guard movement spanned three years from 1966 to 1969. Its frenzy engulfed Chinese society (see for example Xu 1999). The self-organised and self-determined ‘revolutionary’ actions of Red Guards were impressive, violent and brutal. In the name of getting rid of the ‘Four Olds,’ Red Guards persecuted alleged ‘capital roaders,’ and ‘bourgeoisie’ intellectuals, and raided private properties for ‘anti-revolutionary’ or ‘bourgeoisie’ articles. People targeted by Red Guards were selected on a very arbitrary basis. Red Guards first attacked their teachers to denounce them as ‘bourgeois intellectuals’ or ‘bourgeois academic authorities.’ Then the scope of Red Guard action expanded from campuses to social and governmental institutes. Artists and writers, so-called ‘rightists’, former capitalists, former landlords, and government cadres were denounced, humiliated, and beaten in public, resulting in bloodshed, killing, and suicide. Governmental authorities were attacked and threatened. The historian Charles Patrick FitzGerald (1902–1992), who specialised in Chinese history, stated that in the first year of the Cultural Revolution Red Guards ‘brought the educational system to a stop: it has disrupted the CPC machine, displaced several high functionaries and virtually brought intellectual life to an end’ (FitzGerald 1968, 53). Not until June 1967 when Red Guards (aged between 12 and 17 years) were urged to go back to the classroom, did universities and schools reopen. Red Guard organisations were dissolved (see FitzGerald 1968, 53). The violence and chaos created by Red Guards during the first three years of the Cultural Revolution meant those were the most chaotic years in the history of the PRC. More than any other aspect of the Cultural Revolution, the Red Guard movement was most responsible for the chaos and violence of that early period.

As mentioned previously, Liang Heng, Gao Yuan, Zi-ping Luo, Jung Chang, Zhai Zhenhua, Rae Yang, Ting-xing Ye were old enough to become Red Guards.

Red Guards, as a whole, were the direct perpetrators of persecutions and social chaos. From a personal perspective, the Red Guard movement provided the Red Guards with their first chance to engage in societal affairs. In relating self-stories during this period, there is a common issue that these authors have to deal with: how to narrate the self during this period of chaos, a chaos that was directly caused by their cohort. Should they portray themselves as perpetrators, victims, or witnesses? Obviously the Red Guard authors eschewed portraying themselves as mere perpetrators, but expressed a sense of being victimised. Their activities in the Red Guard movement are explained as being a consequence of their political indoctrination prior to the Cultural Revolution, notwithstanding that they still insisted on retaining some sense of enduring and innate core values. Those from the families of the political elite, intellectual families, and capitalist families, all reacted differently to the Red Guard movement, and this is evident in their accounts of their participation in the movement. Anchee Min was smart, so she was selected as the student representative to criticise the teacher. Zhu Xiao Di was too young, so he gained knowledge about the Red Guard movement from his Red Guard sister, who was one of the eight leaders of the Red Guard organisation at her school (Zhu 1998, 38). Despite this, Zhu Xiao Di's narrative maintains a self who is interested in politics by mixing political comments with his personal accounts. Zhai Zhenhua and Rae Yang portrayed themselves as zealous Red Guards; Liang Heng and Gao Yuan were entertainment-seeking Red Guards; Jung Chang, Zi-ping Luo and Ting-xing Ye were passive followers.

Firmly identifying with socialist ideals and ideology, Zhai Zhenhua and Rae Yang actively embraced the Cultural Revolution. They considered it a good chance to exercise their political ideals and their elitism. They immediately became Red

Guard leaders. For Zhai Zhenhua, holding a leading position was testimony to her excellence in academic courses and progressiveness in politics. For Rae Yang, being a leader meant she could turn her political ideals into reality and assist her role in building a socialist China. Since Zhai Zhenhua and Rae Yang's parents were veteran Communists who fought for the founding of the PRC, their heroic stories nurtured Zhai and Yang with an awareness of inheriting the mission of their parents' generation. They thought it was now their turn to continue the cause of constructing a prosperous, socialist China. With this understanding, they confirmed their identification with socialist ideology and their collectivist selves. At school, they actively learned from selfless models so as to self-cultivate collectivistic morals such as sacrificing self-interest, even their personal life, to the public interest, and showing loyalty to the country.

According to Zhai Zhenhua's understanding, a progressive student was a student who performed well both in academic courses and in political activities. Since her enrolment in a highly selective middle school had already demonstrated her excellence at studies, Zhai figured that there was a need to show her activeness in politics. The Cultural Revolution gave her the opportunity to demonstrate her comprehensive political progressiveness. Zhai Zhenhua at first established herself as a politically active student, and thus subsequently was made one of the four Communist League members in her class (Zhai 1992, 58). In this leading position she was able to exhibit her talents and progressiveness in politics. She organised a denunciation meeting against their teacher. She forced the teacher to stand at the platform, head lowered and back bent (Zhai 1992, 69). She continued performing progressively in politics and later became leader of the Red Guard group of her grade (Zhai 1992, 76). After witnessing and experiencing more brutal and violent actions,

she became accustomed to bloody violence. She recalled one house raid that was under her leadership. On her order, the fellow Red Guards beat the victim harshly. The next day she was told that the victim had died (Zhai 1992, 98–99). Zhai managed to excuse this act of persecution by claiming that casualties among class enemies were inevitable in revolutionary actions and she ‘shouldn’t be intimidated by the death of one class enemy’ (Zhai 1992, 98). She continued to play her part as ‘bravely’ as before whenever new tasks were assigned to her. She devoted herself entirely to the busy revolutionary life until the Red Guards were criticised in March 1967. All of a sudden, she realised that Mao and the CPC had fooled her. She summarised her experiences as a Red Guard leader by stating:

Scene after scene of the Cultural Revolution replayed itself in my mind: puzzling over the meaning of Yingqiu’s big-character poster, criticising the school leaders and teachers, joining the Red Guards and being received by Mao, and raiding homes and fighting the students from bad families. How foolish I had been! I didn’t understand the revolution, but strained to catch up and be in its vanguard. Time and again my ability in proletarian politics had been proved wanting, but I never lost heart or gave up trying to improve myself. All because I had such blind faith in Chairman Mao and the party (Zhai 1992, 119).

Zhai Zhenhua’s reflections on her Red Guard ‘revolutionary’ actions ostensibly admitted her wrongful deeds, but she interpreted her self as a victim of Mao and the CPC. Her innate self had actually been exploited, but, it demonstrated that her self had been retained. It was because of her elitist quality that she had become an active

Red Guard. In this way, on the one hand she eschewed blame for her radical and violent actions, and on the other hand she portrayed a constant self: a ‘progressive’ student both in academic courses and political performance.

Similar to Zhai Zhenhua, Rae Yang traced the path of how she became a radical Red Guard. On this course, her self did not depart from the self that was portrayed prior to the Cultural Revolution: a tomboy with socialist ideals. She embraced the launch of the Cultural Revolution, believing it would lead to the ideal society that her father’s generation struggled for at the cost of many lives.

I was extremely serious about the Cultural Revolution. I believed that through this revolution the Chinese people, led by our great leader Chairman Mao, would wipe out bureaucracy, corruption, and privileges from among government officials. We would build an exemplary society for the entire world (Yang 1997, 22).

In Rae Yang’s mind Mao was a hero. Sincerely worshipping him she was totally willing to participate in the Cultural Revolution on his call. She wrote, ‘I loved him because of the tremendous sacrifice he made for the Chinese people: in the past four decades, he had lost six family members’ (Yang 1997, 112). Mao was not only a public hero loved by the whole nation as a ‘great leader, great commander, great teacher, and great helmsman,’ but also the idol of a fifteen-year-old girl, ‘a secret, sweetheart hero’ (Yang 1997, 112–113). ‘For such a hero I was willing to do anything he might want me to do,’ Rae Yang recalled (Yang 1997, 113). Rae Yang’s passion for the ‘revolution’ was due not only to her worship of revolutionary heroes, but also because the Cultural Revolution set her free from adolescent repression and

her frustration with the social inequalities she witnessed. For example, obvious unfairness existed between students from different families of various political status. Students from worker or peasant families had limited access to the same educational sources. Students from official families, either explicitly or implicitly, paraded a sense of superiority, while students from worker and peasant families felt inferior (Yang 1997, 52, 91). Another contradiction that Rae Yang observed was that, on the one hand, in accordance with general educational goals, teachers trained students to ‘be smart, rational, and analytical;’ on the other hand, students were required to be ‘teachers’ little lambs’ and ‘the Party’s obedient tools,’ which repressed independent thinking (Yang 1997, 115). All these conflicts upset Rae Yang, who had already been shaped by socialist ideology, and led to Rae Yang’s passionate performance during the Red Guard movement.

In response to ‘Chairman Mao’s call to combat the revisionist educational line’ (Yang 1997, 117), Rae Yang made big-character posters to denounce the teachers by employing the ‘revolutionary’ rhetoric that she had learned. Along with big-character-poster criticism which evolved into public beating and humiliation, and even killing, Rae Yang’s feelings accordingly evolved from excitement, jubilation, and freedom into uneasiness and confusion. But her revolutionary zeal powerfully overwhelmed her faint and secret uneasiness. Rae Yang joined in the Red Guard carnival, wearing a Red Guard uniform and armband, chanting slogans, singing revolutionary songs, and dancing around bonfires. Adolescent energy burst out in the thrilling collective activities (Yang 1997, 122–123). With no school lectures and no examinations, students found that they were in charge of themselves. They could do things on their own initiative. Making revolution was their only enterprise, for which they were the designers and actors. Rae Yang led her group to break the ‘Four Olds’

at restaurants. In order to abolish the practice of being served by waiters or waitresses, she set new rules, called 'four orders,' to replace customers' old habits: 'One, go to the window to get your own food. Two, carry it to the table yourselves. Three, wash your own dishes. Four, you must finish the food you ordered' (Yang 1997, 124). She explained that because she was busy breaking the 'Four Olds' at restaurants, she was not interested in home raids. She said that she was active but not radical. What she was fond of was political theories. She travelled from Beijing to Guangzhou province to propagandise the significance of the Cultural Revolution. Rae Yang turned herself into a vehement and persuasive speaker. Her speeches could last hours and she could talk audiences into tears and anger (Yang 1997, 135). She attached her political ideals to her actions.

Feminine appearance and personal hygiene were regarded as bourgeois habits, so Rae Yang's tomboy image and manners were justified. She continued to be a tomboy, sporting a suntanned face, short hair, sour clothes, dirty hands, and smelly feet (Yang 1997, 131). Rae Yang wrote, 'I almost forgot I was a girl. I was a Red Guard. Others were Red Guards too. And that was it' (Yang 1997, 135). Being a Red Guard was desexualised, as a chapter title 'Red Guards had no sex' demonstrates. 'Sex' was considered to belong to 'vulgar desires' that should be despised. A true revolutionary was defined by Mao in his article 'Serve the People': 'A revolutionary should be "a pure person, a noble person, a virtuous person, a person who is free of vulgar desires, a person who is valuable to the people"' (Yang 1997, 136). But Rae Yang's concept of personhood was challenged by an incident. A man was caught trying to rape Rae Yang's two Red Guard female colleagues. Rae Yang recounted that they did not send the person to the police but interrogated him personally. Instead of surrendering to these Red Guards, the man provoked them by behaving in

a vulgar manner, which led him to be beaten to death (Yang 1997, 136–138). Rae Yang does not articulate what role she played in this incident, but vaguely expresses that she felt disturbed by his death. She persuaded herself that it was the man's own fault and at the same time regarded violence as a way of forging the self into a true revolutionary (Yang 1997, 139). Constantly self-cultivating, Rae Yang was determined to work for the revolutionary ideal regardless of any painful confusion she felt about changes in the political climate. When the call to go down to the countryside came, Rae Yang volunteered for a farm in the coldest region in China, a place known as the Great Northern Wilderness (Yang 1997, 159).

For Liang Heng and Gao Yuan, the attraction of the Cultural Revolution was its novelty because they had no interest in politics. What the Cultural Revolution brought about was a new lifestyle, and particular freedom for Liang Heng. Liang Heng said, 'Such activities were a lot of fun, and a welcome break from the aimless life at home in the newspaper compound' (Liang and Shapiro 1983, 41). Gao Yuan was a studious boy, temperate and thoughtful (Gao 1987, 13, 350). At the inception of the Cultural Revolution, big-character posters had more significance in form than content. Producing big-character posters was not different from previous school collective activities. In the eyes of Gao Yuan and Liang Heng, it was a platform to show off their embracement of collective activities, artistic talent, elegant calligraphy, and literary creativity (Gao 1987, 35). Both Liang Heng and Gao Yuan tried the new way of expressing innocuous opinions against teachers. Liang contributed his talent to painting. He illustrated a big-character poster that criticised a teacher of his (Liang and Shapiro 1983, 47–48). When Liang Heng's father learned about Liang's action, he apologised to the teacher, on behalf of Liang Heng, for his son's wrongful criticism, and then asked Liang Heng to say sorry to the teacher in person. The

teacher accepted Liang's apology (Liang and Shapiro 1983, 50).

In creating big-character posters targeting teachers, Gao Yuan presented more interest in creating a new literary expression than in criticising his teacher because he was by nature fond of literary creation. Thus, his literary talent became the highlight of his poster and was widely complimented, while the criticism of the teacher was mostly ignored (Gao 1987, 48). Subsequently, the teacher talked to Gao Yuan about her miserable family history. Gao Yuan felt very sorry about what he had done. A few days later he persuaded his classmate to withdraw his attack on this teacher (Gao 1987, 50). In this way the wrongful deeds that Liang Heng and Gao Yuan committed against their teachers did not result in much harm to them. In time, reconciliation was reached between the two sides. During the remainder of the Red Guard period, Liang Heng learned how to survive, relying on his literary talent, and by staying clear of the Red Guards' more overt activities.

Differing from Liang Heng, who is portrayed as a survivor of the Cultural Revolution, Gao Yuan, a thoughtful and studious student from an official family, felt urged to make sense of the Cultural Revolution. He 'went to the library to review all the papers of the past few weeks' (Gao 1987, 36). But unfortunately he became more confused. He decided to adopt a tactic: 'Wait and see' (Gao 1987, 38). Against his will, the escalating wave of the Cultural Revolution engulfed Gao Yuan before he could make any sense of it. Additionally, some revolutionary actions brought Gao Yuan much fun. They armed themselves like sentries, with javelins, and patrolled in the school courtyard. Gao Yuan wrote, 'I felt the same sense of excitement I had felt playing spy games in primary school' (Gao 1987, 57). Although he had no interest in politics, his academic excellence made him automatically stand out. His class voted him to be one of five delegates from his class to attend a school-level meeting to

elect the members of the Cultural Revolution Preparatory Committee (Gao 1987, 78–80). However, in his account Gao Yuan made little of his leadership. He recalled the Red Guards' actions of house ransacking and destroying the ancient temple. But all the actions were described in the first person plural (Gao 1987, 85–99). For example, Gao Yuan wrote, 'We marched off, waving our red flags, singing the Red Guard song, and exulting in our latest victory over the Four Olds' (Gao 1987, 94). Later on, the political trend changed. Red Guards began to attack governmental authority. Gao Yuan's father, a county leader, became a Red Guards' target. Life became paradoxical in Gao Yuan's eyes. He lost enthusiasm for 'making revolution' with his classmates (Gao 1987, 110). Gao Yuan became a victim of Red Guards' factional conflicts because of his Red Guard brother's activities (Gao 1987, 296–304). To survive, he retreated into his books and hobbies. As his love of books indicates, his innate self remained the same even after he experienced the Red Guard movement. He was still a studious and quiet person who loved reading and learning.

Zi-ping Luo, Jung Chang, Anchee Min, and Ting-xing Ye portrayed themselves as passive followers of the Red Guard movement either by their own choice or because of their inferior political origins. They became Red Guards because all middle school students joined Red Guard organisations. Being a Red Guard did not alter their personalities, but affirmed their selves. When Zi-ping Luo found that the status of a Red Guard could bring personal benefits, she applied to join a Red Guard organisation (Luo 1990, 75). Being a Red Guard, she could get some political advantages to make up for the disadvantages resulting from her family background. For example, as a Red Guard she was allowed to visit the various institutions in charge of the rehabilitation of her 'Rightist-labelled father' (Luo 1990, 78). As for Jung Chang, the Cultural Revolution seemed to provide opportunities for

her to display her individual personalities. She was not active in political activities because she had the innate ability to think independently. She could make an independent decision according to her individual needs. For example, when she discovered that being a Red Guard was a prestigious thing pursued by many students, she immediately submitted her application to the Red Guard leader (Chang 1993[1991], 381). However, she was not accepted immediately, because she ‘was considered soft and “too inactive”’ (Chang 1993[1991], 381). In fact, as she defined her self, she instinctively disliked, and obviously lacked enthusiasm for, collective activities (Chang 1993[1991], 382, 390). In this way, Jung Chang showed that she was always a passive participant, a witness–participant, and therefore she did not commit any of the brutal and injurious practices of the Red Guards. In other words, she retained her individuality, which saved her from committing any of the wrongful deeds of the Red Guard movement.

Ting-xing Ye’s only Red Guard action was to take part in the Red Guard parade, because she feared ‘being the object of scorn and abuse at school’ for her inferior political status: the offspring of a capitalist (Ye 2000[1997], 110, 119). Her capitalist family origin prevented her from deep involvement in political activities. All that she could do was what she did prior to the Cultural Revolution: carefully struggle for self-benefit. As for Anchee Min, except for instigating the denunciation of her teacher when she was only a primary school student, she had little to recall about her activities during this period. She was, after all, too young to be an active Red Guard (Min 1993, 30–40).

Generally, Zi-ping Luo, Jung Chang, Anchee Min, and Ting-xing Ye expressed a similar idea: although they were Red Guards and participated in this or that Red Guard activity, their participation was motivated by self-interest rather than

by a supposed contribution to the socialist ideal. With a strong sense of their selves as independent individuals, a sense established in their childhood, they maintained their sense of individuality throughout their experiences in the Red Guard movement. And with this sense of self, they achieved self-realisation and reached maturity. They articulated a selfhood distinct from a self immersed in a collectivity—more like rocks in the social river than free-flowing with the current.

Attaining the self in the time of the rustication movement

In respect of the authors who experienced the political events of the Cultural Revolution, the selves they portray are realised as individuals whose achievements were based on their innate merits and individual efforts. Some portrayed their selves as inured to the influence of the broader sociopolitical currents in which they were immersed. While others less inured to these influences stress their stability and consistency. Zi-ping Luo, Jung Chang, Anchee Min, and Ting-xing Ye belong to the latter cohort. Their selves were generally stable and constant by carefully keeping a distance from deep involvement in political activities. From the very beginning of the Cultural Revolution, they had been passive towards the changes in society. They had never actively identified themselves with the politics of the Cultural Revolution. Therefore, their selves throughout the entire course of the Cultural Revolution were kept consistent and eventually led them to self-realisation. There is no salient transition that indicates their transformation from the state of the innate self to the state of self-consciousness, then the state of self-realisation.

However, Liang Heng, Gao Yuan, Zhai Zhenhua, and Rae Yang belong to the former cohort, who were inured to the influence of the broader sociopolitical currents. They experienced crucial events that catalysed them from immaturity to maturity in terms of their views of the self and the world. They changed as their trust and

enthusiasm for the government evaporated into cynical disillusion. Liang Heng, Gao Yuan, Zhai Zhenhua, and Rae Yang relate crucial events that drew them away from political life, which marked their awareness of selfhood and subjectivity. They had formed a mature understanding of their selves and the world. They began to work for their self-achievement by relying on their own merit and effort.

The key trigger for Liang Heng's self-awareness was personal security. The turning point came when he was prevented from becoming more deeply involved in the Red Guard movement because his father was denounced as a 'reactionary capitalist stinking intellectual'. This event was the first lesson that led him to become self-conscious (Liang and Shapiro 1983, 51–60). He suddenly became aware of his inferior political status. Liang Heng was intimidated into exposing the denunciation of his father (Liang and Shapiro 1983, 63). In order to protect Liang Heng, his father and sisters persuaded him to attack his father publicly (Liang and Shapiro 1983, 65). He said, 'That was my first lesson in self-protection in modern society' (Liang and Shapiro 1983, 66). It was because of this that Liang Heng suddenly found that he had lost his passion for the Cultural Revolution. As a result, seeking protection and developing survival skills became Liang Heng's concerns.

The second lesson for self-protection that Liang Heng learnt was his father's instruction: Chairman Mao's words were the only reliable things that could be used as a tool for self-protection. Liang Heng said that was 'another lesson in self-protection in modern society' (Liang and Shapiro 1983, 76). The Red Guards ransacked his family's house (Liang and Shapiro 1983, 73–74). Liang Heng was interrogated on suspicion of producing counterrevolutionary slogans (Liang and Shapiro 1983, 81–85). The situation was getting more complicated, it was harder to tell who was 'right' and who was 'wrong'. In this situation his father told him only

Mao's words were correct. Gradually Liang Heng became more and more skilled in self-protection and negotiating affairs of state. He was able to keep safe and meanwhile take advantage of the 'Great Link-up'—Red Guards' free travel—to satisfy his curiosity about the world. He made himself busy by travelling up to the province of Jiangxi, down to Guangzhou, and then to Beijing (Liang and Shapiro 1983, 101–127). After he returned from Beijing, he experienced, as an on-site spectator, the Red Guard factional military conflicts in Changsha, his hometown. (Liang and Shapiro 1983, 128–137). This is another example illustrating how he knew to satisfy his curiosity as well as keep himself safe. Through choosing to participate in these activities, he demonstrated his selfhood and subjectivity.

Since he realised the importance of self-security, he had nothing to do with politics. Managing his own life became his task. And his skill in this was greatly improved when he was left alone at the age of thirteen to manage his daily life. In the cold spring of 1968, Liang Heng's father was sent to a Chairman Mao Thought Study Class to remould his thought. His two sisters went to the countryside to follow the calling of 'Going up to the mountains and down to the countryside' (Liang and Shapiro 1983, 138–141). Liang Heng was the only one who stayed at home. He had to take care of himself. In seeking self-defence, he made friends with children from high-ranking official families, who still had access to some privileges (Liang and Shapiro 1983, 149). Liang Heng hung around with them, gifting them with cigarettes and wine, and using his literary talent to earn self-protection from them (Liang and Shapiro 1983, 149–154). He managed his own life, earning money for food, killing time by fighting, reading, learning musical instruments, or developing other hobbies (Liang and Shapiro 1983, 154–160). He became mature with the knowledge that he had to take responsibility for his own life.

Gao Yuan's transition also started from the moment his father was denounced in public. Following the denunciation, Gao Yuan's passion for the Cultural Revolution faded. His father, a veteran Communist who had fought against the Japanese invaders and struggled for the founding of the new China, was dedicated to serving the masses. For this, Gao Yuan even complained, 'Papa loves the peasants more than he loves us' (Gao 1987, 105). He could not understand why a Communist official who had sacrificed all for the people should become the target of the Red Guards too. For fear of being attacked because of his father's situation, Gao Yuan distanced himself from Red Guard activities as a way of self-protection (Gao 1987, 110). But his father's plight did not decisively lead him to form a mature understanding of his self until later when his life was threatened.

Similarly to Liang Heng, Gao Yuan also took advantage of the 'Great Link-up' travelling around the country for free. When he returned to his school from travelling, Gao Yuan found that the radical Red Guards had taken control of it. Gao Yuan's brother was an active Red Guard. He led another Red Guard group against radical politics. The conflict between Red Guard groups evolved into factional clashes. Gao Yuan threw himself into fighting on the side of his brother. But their side was defeated. The radical group caught Gao Yuan and beat him brutally in revenge (Gao 1987, 296–304). His legs badly hurt, Gao Yuan had to spend a whole week in bed (Gao 1987, 301). His fate was not as bad as two of his classmates, who were beaten to death (Gao 1987, 310). At this point, he realised his own life was under threat and decided to surrender to the radicals, for nothing was more important than life. He traded his hobby of assembling transistor radios for survival. The radicals ordered Gao Yuan to make radios for them. Gao Yuan said, 'With no right

to refuse this great honor, I became their slave' (Gao 1987, 327). Gao thought, 'As long as they did not beat me, I did not mind humoring them' (Gao 1987, 339).

Zhai Zhenhua's subjecthood sprouted after she returned from travelling in the 'Great Link-up'. When the 'wind and storm' of ransacking houses and denunciation meetings was over, Zhai followed the call of travel in order to exchange revolutionary experiences (Zhai 1992, 110–115). Back home from travelling, Zhai lived a leisurely life for a period. Seeing others exercising violence, she writes that she suddenly began to reflect on what she had done. She said, 'When I looked back at what we had done two months earlier, I thought we had gone crazy' (Zhai 1992, 117). When it came to March 1967, teams from the People's Liberation Army (PLA) were sent to schools to take control of Red Guards temporarily. They announced that Red Guards were the 'accomplices of the working groups in pushing a new capitalist reactionary line' (Zhai 1992, 119). Zhai was asked to make self-criticism of what she had done. Thus, Zhai changed from 'a leader of the revolution to its target overnight!' (Zhai 1992, 119). After that Zhai intentionally isolated herself from Red Guard activities, living an unfettered, self-managed life. 'Every day, my classmates and I gathered at the school as usual ... we taught each other how to bicycle, swim, and play cards and Chinese chess' (Zhai 1992, 129). She began to care about her own interests prior to the state call. Very reluctantly, she accepted the assignment of being rusticated in a backward village in Shaanxi province. Despite the change, for the rest of her life she continued performing 'progressiveness,' which she ascribes to her core values.

Rae Yang's subjecthood was exercised differently from the other authors. It was more a process than a sudden turning. She traced the changes of her political ambitions from adherence, to compromise to giving up. She volunteered to go to the

Great Northern Wilderness with the resolution to devote all her life to changing the backwardness of the countryside, and the wilderness into a granary (Yang 1997, 159). Hardships in her material life and illiterate peasants did not dampen her enthusiasm. But the corruption of local officials and their abuse of power disappointed her (Yang 1997, 176–189). She gradually grew tired of politics. She began to think that she was not a hero, but rather a ‘helpless puppet’ (Yang 1997, 194). Despite the disappointment, she would not deny her socialist ideals by retreating to her personal interests. She even volunteered to keep pigs, which was the toughest and least desirable job. However, from 1971 on, ‘going down to the countryside’ was no longer praised publicly as a glorious thing. ‘Educated youths’ tried every means to get back to their home cities. Insisting on her socialist ideals she came to feel alienated (Yang 1997, 194–207). There were eight ‘educated youths’ working together, including Rae Yang. By 1972, Rae Yang was the only one remaining in the Great Northern Wilderness. Only then did she become desperate for her future. She began to think that she had been cheated. She concluded that going down to the wilderness was simply a mistake. Therefore, when she eventually managed to visit her parents working in the city in 1973, she did not go back to the Great Northern Wilderness (Yang 1997, 217–262). From then onwards she thoroughly gave up her ideal of sacrificing herself to the welfare of the country. She started to work for her own benefit.

Summary

Although Liang Heng, Gao Yuan, Zi-ping Luo, Jung Chang, Zhai Zhenhua, Anchee Min, Rae Yang, Ting-xing Ye and Zhu Xiao Di narrated different tales of their self-formation, a clear thematic thread is evident. They describe their coming-of-age during the history of the Cultural Revolution. In this way, Gao Yuan’s narrative is

typical of his cohort. Along with the evolution of the events of the Cultural Revolution, their innate selves progressively unfolded, and were then consciously exercised. Although Zi-ping Luo, Jung Chang, Anchee Min, and Ting-xing Ye did not depict crucial moments of self-evolution, they mapped the process of self-formation from the state of naivety to maturity, and ultimately to the state of attaining self-realisation and subjecthood. Liang Heng, Gao Yuan, Zhai Zhenhua, and Rae Yang narrated the crucial transitive moments, from which their selves moved from the state of immaturity to the state of maturity. This follows the format of the *Bildungsroman* genre. Zhu Xiao Di's text constantly expresses his sensitivity and concerns about Chinese politics, which is the feature of his self. Thematically, Zhu Xiao Di, as the hero, portrayed himself as a stable and coherently unified individual.

Despite the different tales narrated in these nine Western-based texts, the heroes/heroines are generically conceptualised as rational and unified individuals. They develop their self-knowledge on the ground of their innate qualities, which constitute the core of their selves. Their individual personalities are highlighted and made valid through the entire process of self-development. Relying on their innate qualities, the heroes/heroines struggle for their selfhood and self-achievement. Eventually, they attain the ability to exercise their subjectivity, which is the signification of the maturity of their self-formation. As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, such an assumption of the self is not found in China-based literature of the Cultural Revolution generation, for example the narratives of Shi Tiesheng, Liang Xiaosheng and Zhang Xincan. The selves as presented in these nine Western-based texts are basically constructed on the modern Western concept of the self. It is on this basis that these nine Western-based authors from the Cultural Revolution

generation composed their stories of life spent under the PRC in the *Bildungsroman* genre.

Chapter Five

The Cultural Revolution generation's texts: victimised selves of narrators

As discussed in the previous chapter, the self-narratives by Liang Heng, Gao Yuan, Zi-ping Luo, Jung Chang, Zhai Zhenhua, Anchee Min, Rae Yang, Ting-xing Ye, and Zhu Xiao Di constructed the stories of their life during China's Cultural Revolution in the *Bildungsroman* genre. Their narratives were grounded in the concept that the self is coherent, unified, and self-sufficient. From a state of ignorance of their innate selves to the state of self-realisation, they, as the heroes/heroines of their narratives, became mature and attained subjectivity. Subjectivity is canonically the central concern of modern Western autobiography. As Georges Gusdorf argued, modern Western autobiographers concern themselves with 'the task of reconstructing the unity of a life across time,' and the sense of unity is not 'received from the outside' but essentially from autobiographers' interiority (Gusdorf 1980[1956], 37). The 'constituent elements of the personality' are structurally designed to impose the author 'on the complex material of exterior facts' (Gusdorf 1980[1956], 37). In other words, modern Western autobiography is a genre for displaying autobiographers' power of subjectivity over exterior influence so as to demonstrate the self's ability to transcend the vicissitudes of life.

This transcendence is evident in the texts of the nine Western-based authors above. Despite their traumatic sense of being victimised under the CPC and the Cultural Revolution, they still were able to impose the 'constituent elements of [their] personality ... on the complex material of exterior facts' and experiences

(Gusdorf 1980[1956], 37). To this end on the one hand they describe how their sense of self was thwarted by the PRC. On the other they emphasised how their innate qualities, courage, and efforts enabled them to survive the ravages they were subjected to. The formulaic qualities of these texts and the generic nature of their complaints and criticism of the PRC, particularly during the time of the Cultural Revolution, form a subgenre of autobiography in the West, known as the 'literature of the wounded.' This chapter focuses on the component 'bio' of autobiography to understand how Liang Heng, Gao Yuan, Jung Chang and the other six Western-based writers from the Cultural Revolution generation constructed their sense of self. To gauge how Western literary forms, culture and potential readership might have influenced these narratives, I turn first to the narratives of their China-based counterparts, a body of literature known as 'Scar literature.'

Narrating 'Scar' after the Cultural Revolution

In the sense of detailing their suffering during the Cultural Revolution, Liang Heng, Gao Yuan, Jung Chang, and the other six Western-based writers' texts are similar to the 'Scar literature' of China. It was given this name because the body of work features the trauma left by the radical politics of the Cultural Revolution, for which 'scar' is the metaphor. It emerged in the years following the Cultural Revolution and prevailed during the 1980s. Those autobiographies written in the West about this period, including the nine Western-based self-narratives discussed here, belong to a genre known as the 'literature of the wounded.' As suggested by the synonyms 'scar' and 'wound,' China-based 'Scar literature' and Western-based 'literature of the wounded' share negative depictions of life during the Cultural Revolution. It might be feasible to argue that the 'literature of the wounded' is a variation of the China-based 'Scar literature.' At least two reasons can account for this. Firstly, the authors

of Western-based traumatic accounts are the contemporaries of China-based authors of 'Scar literature,' and they shared similar experiences during the Cultural Revolution. Although they migrated to the West during the 1980s, their connection with the PRC was maintained. They were therefore well informed about consistent accounts of the Cultural Revolution appearing in China. Secondly, both Western-based and China-based literatures expressed the same theme of denouncing the Cultural Revolution. However, because China-based and Western-based narratives were written in different cultural and literary contexts, certain differences in these bodies of work can be discerned.

'Scar literature' emerged in a special historical moment of the PRC: the aftermath of the Cultural Revolution. Its appearance reflected a particular social and political situation at a moment in time. It was during the period when the Cultural Revolution was being denounced and the Chinese nation felt the need to vent its anger, depression, frustration, resentment, and other negative feelings towards the Cultural Revolution because of the suffering it caused. Historically, the Cultural Revolution has been the most momentous political campaign in the PRC. The impacts on Chinese society and people are significant and enduring, and its rationale and legacy remain the subjects of debate. Nevertheless, a consensus was reached during the 1980s that its impact was mostly to China's detriment. It caused unnecessary suffering.

The official verdict of the Cultural Revolution was issued in 1981. It defined the Cultural Revolution as an event causing ten years of chaos and concluded that it was 'responsible for the most severe setback and the heaviest losses suffered by the

Party, the state and the people since the founding of the People's Republic.'²² Responding to the negative effects of the Cultural Revolution, publications that exposed its darkness proliferated, forming a particular literary phenomenon in the 1980s. Most authors were members of the Cultural Revolution generation. The immediate response in literature was a reflection of the traditional self-sense of Chinese individuals—a circumstantial concept of the self. Their works portray the trauma caused by the radical politics of the Cultural Revolution. The narrative concern is not the self but the Cultural Revolution. It was this body of literature that became known as 'Scar literature' (Braester 2003, 146–157; Knight 2003, 527–532; McDougall and Louie 1998, 333). The name is after Lu Xinhua's (1951–) short story *Shanghen* ('Scar' 伤痕) published in 1978 in a newspaper.

The story 'Scar' tells of a female 'educated youth' during the period of the campaign of 'educated youths' who goes 'up to mountains and down to countryside.' It describes the protagonist's torment caused by the conflict between her loyalty to the state and her mother's 'disloyalty.' Her mother, a veteran Communist, is accused of being a traitor. For this reason, the daughter cuts off links with her mother to show her correct political stance while she stays in the countryside working as an 'educated youth'. Nine years later the Cultural Revolution ended, and her mother was exonerated. She had wronged her mother. She cheerfully rushes home but sadly finds her mother has just died. The author entitled the story 'Scar' to allegorise the traumatic impacts of the Cultural Revolution on Chinese people physically and psychologically.

This publication resonated with the Chinese public and stimulated others to recount their experiences. 'Scar' writing soon became a literary fashion. Most non-

²² 'On Questions in Party History: Resolution on Certain Questions in the History of Our Party Since the Founding of the People's Republic of China,' adopted by the Sixth Plenary Session of the 11th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on June 27, 1981. *Beijing Review*, Vol. 24, No. 27, 1981, 20.

fictional narratives were authored by established intellectuals. Zhang Xianliang's *Grass Soup* (1994), and Yang Jiang's *A Cadre School Life* (1982) are the exemplars. Many 'Scar' writings by members of the Cultural Revolution generation are fictional. Among a small number of non-fiction narratives by the Culture Revolution generation Liang Xiaosheng's *Monologue of a Red Guard* (1987) might be considered a book-length example.

'Scar literature' is characterised by its denunciation of the radical politics adopted during the Cultural Revolution. It is replete with descriptions of the harsh experiences of 'educated youths' rusticated in the countryside, persecuted intellectuals and CPC officials, and commoners. The narrative tone is often one of sorrow and oppression. It serves the function of psychological therapy and catharsis for a nation surviving ten years of hardship. It also reflects people's introspection about this significant era. However, its leitmotif of wounded pride and self-pity, of concern for the self, was considered too superficial, and too narrow to provide insights into history, society, and humankind (Louie 1989, 21). These wider concerns are found within the Chinese literary tradition of *Chunqiu*-style. In this tradition written expression is not oriented to individuals' self-centredness but to the welfare of society.

Soon other genres emerged, such as 'root-seeking literature,' 'literature of educated youths,' 'avant-garde literature,' with more profound and sophisticated analyses and reflections on the historical contexts underlying the Cultural Revolution, and philosophical explorations about humankind and society (Chi and Wang 2000, xxviii–xxx).

Guo Xiaodong 郭小东, who is among early scholars studying the literature of the Cultural Revolution generation, argues that 'Scar literature,' with its superficial

descriptions, developed into the ‘literature of educated youths’ featuring a more contemplative and philosophical interest in ‘self-discovery’ (Che 2012; Guo 1988, 42–46; 2005, 2011, 2013; Louie 1989, 91). This body of literature no longer indulged in accounts of trauma and self-pity. As the collection of educated youths’ memories *Wasting and Rising: Fifty-five Educated Youths’ Life Stories* (He 1992) implies, wasting or rising were intertwined arguments in the lives of ‘educated youths.’ Although their actual experiences varied, self-identification with collectivist values runs through their accounts. It is clear that they were inclined to perceive the self and life within the collectivistic tradition of Chinese society. Traditional values as well as the values indoctrinated by Chinese socialist education such as patriotism, nationalism, and self-sacrifice for others and the country were maintained and underlie their narratives. Liang Xiaosheng’s fictional works about ‘educated youths’ such as *Jinye you baofengxue* (‘There Is a Snowstorm Tonight’ 今夜有暴风雪) (1983), provide vivid accounts of these collectivist values that served the prevailing mainstream thought (Louie 1989, 97–98). The transient life of ‘Scar literature’ is testimony to the prominent and lasting status of altruism in Chinese society.

Zhang Chengzhi 张承志, Liang Xiaosheng, and Shi Tiesheng are considered as the representative non-fiction writers of ‘educated youths,’ although they do not declare their works as autobiographies. Zhang Chengzhi’s early works like *Black Steed* (1990[1981]) and *Rivers of the North* (2000[1984]) are based on his own experiences as an ‘educated youth’ during the period of the rustication movement. He volunteered to go down to Inner Mongolia from Beijing in 1967 and spent several years on the steppes. Instead of the negativism commonly expressed in ‘Scar literature,’ his works are filled with passionate love for the people and nature. They created a sensation in their rebuttals of the negativism of ‘Scar literature’

(McDougall and Louie 1998, 396). His works eulogise the natural beauty of the Mongolian steppes, the might of China's rivers, and the good nature of common people, such as the self-sacrificing spirit of Mongolian women, and the perseverance of their lifestyle and beliefs in a harsh environment. As an 'educated youth' sent down to Inner Mongolia from Beijing, he built a deep affection for common people. He expressed that the life experience 'down' in Inner Mongolia greatly influenced his values. As he stated in his *Rivers of the North* (2000[1984]), no matter how naïve or mistaken his generation were, they should have no reason to be pessimistic about the future of the country, for its long history and brilliant culture would surely make it thrive (Zhang 2000[1984], 1). Zhang Chengzhi's self-expression manifests a sense of self derived from Confucian collectivism and the transcendental optimism of Daoism.

Similar to Zhang Chengzhi, Liang Xiaosheng and Shi Tiesheng also do not express an overwhelming negativity vis-a-vis experiences during the Cultural Revolution (McDougall and Louie 1998, 396). Shi Tiesheng's narrative depicts the natural rural landscape and rustic peasants. The land is barren; peasants sweat doing torturous farming work year-round and are paid little; material living conditions are extremely poor. Despite their backwardness and poverty, people are simple and sincere. They try their best to care for 'educated youths.' Despite little education, peasants still enjoyed an idyllic cultural life and maintained their ancient customs and folk music heritage. His narrative includes many descriptions of Shaanxi folk songs, which punctuate his story with musicality. His narrative offers a contrast to Jung Chang's portrayals of peasants, who, in Jung Chang's eyes, had nothing worthwhile, only illiteracy and stupidity. In Shi Tiesheng's narrative, he does not feel alienated from the countryside but instead is impressed by the peasants' virtues.

His empathy for and feeling of affinity with the peasantry and the countryside is highlighted in the use of the first person pronoun in his title as well as in the concluding sentences: ‘Oh, my Old Man Bai, my water buffalo, and my faraway Qingping Bay’ (Shi 2001[1983], 19, my translation). As many critics commented, *My Faraway Qingping Bay* is a ‘poem, a poem full of melancholy, pathos, nostalgia and a deep feeling of love’ (Jin Yanyu, in Louie 1989, 97).

Although ‘Scar literature’ and the ‘literature of educated youths’ differ in writing style pertaining to the Cultural Revolution, China-based literary works, either fictional or non-fictional, narrate individuals’ stories to express concerns with historical events and the social environment in which individuals are immersed. It is evident that they bear the legacies of Chinese cultural and literary traditions through which the self is expressed in the depiction of social events and their participation in activities. This literary method of self-expression follows the traditional convention of Chinese autobiographical writing—expressing the self circumstantially, this is, in relation to the broader social world rather than an explicit focus on the narrator’s subjectivity, interiority, and innate sense of self. Wendy Larson termed this kind of self as the ‘circumstantial’ self (Larson 1991). The circumstantial self is the manifestation of ‘Chineseness’ formed by the thoughts of Confucianism and Daoism. Within the philosophical framework of Confucianism and Daoism, the self of the Chinese individual is perceived and considered meaningful only in relation to the exterior social world or natural world. Therefore, although the Chinese individual is the subject of autobiography, the autobiographical act fundamentally and ultimately aims to express the author’s concerns with public interest and the welfare of society. It is certain that the fundamental theme of ‘Scar literature’ was to expose the wrongfulness of the Cultural Revolution. But too much indulgence in portraying

individual victimisation exceeded the expression of ‘Chineseness,’ which inevitably led to the transience of ‘Scar literature’ in China.

While ‘Scar literature’ declined in China, writing about victimisation under the Cultural Revolution became prevalent in the West. Differing from the transience of ‘Scar literature,’ writing about the experience of trauma during the Cultural Revolution in the West was a trend that endured for more than two decades, between the 1980s and 1990s. This body of work is referred to as the ‘literature of the wounded,’ the ‘literature of suffering,’ or ‘survival literature’ (Mirsky 1992; Zarrow 1999). In some ways the texts of the Western-based writers share characteristics with the China-based ‘Scar literature’ texts. In both sets of texts the self is perceived, to a greater or lesser extent, circumstantially. However, except for this theoretical similarity, Western-based ‘literature of the wounded’ is quite different from ‘Scar literature.’

This is because the Western-based Chinese authors privilege a presupposed subjecthood. The Western autobiographical sense of an innate subjectivity is readily discernible, and it is the qualities of their individuality that enabled them to survive their victimisation. Generally, these nine authors portrayed themselves as victimised in three main aspects: intellectual development, material and emotional living conditions, and the oppression of subjectivity. The following section will consider these three aspects.

Narrating victimised selves in the West

Promising students squandered

The analyses in the previous chapter illustrate that, without exception, the authors portrayed themselves as intelligent children and bright students with the promise of going to university after graduating from middle school. The Cultural Revolution

interrupted this expected continuity of intellectual development from secondary education to tertiary education. This became one root of their trauma. Because of this interruption, they felt ‘squandered.’ For example, Zi-ping Luo, one of the nine Western-based authors considered here, proclaimed in her *A Generation Lost: China Under the Cultural Revolution* (1990) that her generation was wasted and became a ‘generation lost.’ Describing bright students ‘being wasted’ or ‘being lost’ is an important motif of their *Bildungsroman* narratives.

In order to demonstrate that their brightness and promise were squandered, these nine authors depicted themselves in reference to the schools they attended or their individual merits. Gao Yuan, Zhai Zhenhua, and Rae Yang referred to their schools as a signification of their intelligence. The others, Liang Heng, Zi-ping Luo, Jung Chang, Anchee Min, Ting-xing Ye, and Zhu Xiao Di stressed their individual merits more than their schools.

The schools that Gao Yuan, Zhai Zhenhua, and Rae Yang attended were so-called ‘key schools,’ highly desired by bright students because ‘key schools’ had a high rate of university enrolment. The key school system at the level of secondary education started in 1953, with the intention of establishing an efficient way to produce maximum educational returns from a limited budget and scarce resources in the shortest possible time (for ‘key school system’ see Wu 2014, 22–26). ‘Key schools’ were equipped with the best facilities and best teachers. With these advantages ‘key schools’ became parents’ desired choice for their children. Entry to ‘key schools’ thus became very competitive. Only those whose examination scores were above the certificate set by ‘key schools’ could be admitted. Naturally, attending key schools became a demonstration of students’ academic excellence. With superb teaching conditions and tightly selected students, ‘key schools’ easily

achieved high rates of student admission to universities. Therefore, admission into a ‘key school’ provided a nearly guaranteed prospect of ultimately attending university.

Scoring high enough in the entrance examinations, Gao Yuan, Zhai Zhenhua, and Rae Yang attended the best middle schools in their hometowns. Moreover, even in these highly competitive schools, they were among the top students. Gao Yuan had outstanding talent in literary writing. He was a very promising candidate for going to Beijing University (*Beida* spelt in pinyin). Gao Yuan said, ‘Beida was where I hoped to go. I had made up my mind the very day I entered Yizhong in the fall of 1964’ (Gao 1987, 32). However, the Cultural Revolution unexpectedly disrupted his life plan. Rae Yang’s school was the prestigious Beijing 101 Middle School. The students in the 101 were implanted with the idea that the school ‘was for the most reliable, most courageous, and most brilliant youths who were to become the nation’s political leaders, top scientists, and finest artists’ (Yang 1997, 92). It was a school for fostering China’s elites.

The middle school that Zhai Zhenhua attended was the Twelfth Middle School for Girls, one of ten key middle schools in Beijing in the 1960s (Zhai 1992, 36).²³ This school had more than a hundred years of history and had earned a good reputation. Li Na, the daughter of Mao and Jiang Qing, was once a student in this school (Zhai 1992, 36). Zhai Zhenhua’s life goal ‘was to graduate from a top university and become a scientist’ (Zhai 1992, 35). Being admitted into the key school that ‘had a university acceptance rate of eighty per cent’ almost guaranteed the realisation of her dream. ‘The road towards my goal of becoming a scientist seemed to be smooth and clear, my future seemed bright’ (Zhai 1992, 36). Similarly, the Cultural Revolution destroyed her dream of going to university.

²³ The Twelfth Middle School for Girls is now known as the Beijing Number 166 Middle School. It is still a good high school in Beijing. <http://xuexiao.eol.cn/html4/1100/114000213/intro.shtml>. Retrieved on 10 March 2016.

The other authors, Liang Heng, Zi-ping Luo, Jung Chang, Anchee Min, Ting-xing Ye, and Zhu Xiao Di, did not stress their school but put weight on their individual merit. They articulated that they were qualified to go to a 'key school' but chose not to. Liang Heng said his academic performance was good enough to qualify him for the best middle school, but he preferred another one because the latter was less politicised (Liang and Shapiro 1983, 39). Zhu Xiao Di prioritised the distance between his home and the school in his decision. As a matter of fact, there was no need for Zhu Xiao Di to choose another school. His school was among the best in his home city and close to his home (Zhu 1998, 25–26). Liang Heng was good at Chinese literary writing and cartoon painting. His literary fervour was quenchless, and he was quick to learn (Liang and Shapiro 1983, 47, 150, 202, 214). Anchee Min had a brilliant gift in memorizing and reciting (Min 1993, 22–23). Zhu Xiao Di was nurtured with a good sense of politics. His knowledge of politics made him stand out from his peers and he became the class leader on the first day of schooling (Zhu 1998, 15–17, 26).

Zi-ping Luo emphasised her enthusiasm for knowledge and her outstanding learning ability. She iterated her classmates' jealousy at her outstanding academic performance and gifted mastery of language (Luo 1990, 9). She was quick at learning and good at debating (Luo 1990, 13–14, 75). She was able to surpass her classmates academically in a short time (Luo 1990, 9). These qualities would naturally lead her to university so that her future academic success would be assured. However, the Cultural Revolution thwarted her potential.

Ting-xing Ye described herself as a girl suffering gender bias from her parents, and political inferiority due to her family's class status as capitalists (Ye 2000[1997], 30, 44–45, 60, 74). In order to achieve self-esteem, she earned

honourable rewards for her academic achievements (Ye 2000[1997], 44–45, 74) and developed the ability to defend her arguments in a debate (Ye 2000[1997], 44–45, 70, 74, 105). She proved herself academically excellent and was confident she would go to university. However, no matter how hard she fought against fate, her ambition was thwarted. The Cultural Revolution interrupted her plan. She did not go to university after finishing her secondary education, but was sent down as an ‘educated youth’ to work on a farm.

Among these nine authors, Jung Chang is the most self-assertive. According to Jung Chang her excellence was comprehensive: she was born healthy, outgoing, sociable, fond of reading, an independent thinker, good at Chinese ‘calligraphy,’ and had a unique individuality (Chang 1993[1991], 234–385). Similar to the other authors, her promising excellence was squandered by the Cultural Revolution. She was sent down to the countryside to be re-educated through farming work and by poorly educated peasants (Chang 1993[1991], 502). She then successively worked as a peasant, a ‘barefoot doctor,’²⁴ a steelworker, and an electrician before she had a chance to go to university (Chang 1993[1991], 592–594, 596, 606–607).

All these authors describe how the launch of the Cultural Revolution hampered their expected future of attending university. Liang Heng, Zi-ping Luo, and Zhu Xiao Di became factory workers; Gao Yuan joined the army; Jung Chang, Zhai Zhenhua, Anchee Min, Rae Yang, and Ting-xing Ye went down to the countryside as ‘educated youths.’ Being promising students, they would normally have gone to university following the completion of their secondary schooling. But they were asked to spend time in the countryside, in the army, or in factories instead

²⁴ ‘A paramedical worker with basic medical training, especially one working in rural China. The phrase, dating from the 1970s, translates Chinese *chijiǎo yīshēng*.’ http://search.credoreference.com/content/entry/brewermod/barefoot_doctor/0. Retrieved on 14 March 2016. For more details, see the English version of the article, ‘The Orientation of the Revolution in Medical Education as Seen in the Growth of “Barefoot Doctors”,’ *Peking Review* No. 38 (20 September 1968): 18–22.

of in a classroom, learning academic subjects. They therefore became a wasted generation. Their sense of resentment and grievance arose through the stark contrast they drew between the school learning that they assumed they would have and the unfavourable manual work they had to do. If not for the Cultural Revolution, their futures would have been scholastically smooth and bright. Thus, they felt victimised intellectually.

This sense of intellectual victimisation was based on the assumption that intellectual development is a lineal progression of acquiring knowledge from books in a classroom. Such a perception of intellectual development has its roots in Chinese intellectual tradition. Gaining knowledge from books and developing scholastically are traditionally considered to be the path to elitism. This path is rooted in the ancient Chinese *keju* 科举 system for selecting scholar-officials in the pre-modern time. Those passing the rigorous exams were recruited as civil officials and highly sought-after status ensued. Acquiring knowledge so as to be a scholar-official was institutionalised through the *keju* system and became a norm of intellectual development in ancient China. Since the selection criterion was intellectual merit rather than family or political origin, this examination system was an effective and efficient measure in selecting talented people. It not only shaped the Chinese social and intellectual life from the years 650 to 1905 but also defined education and knowledge (Elman 2009). Although it was abolished in 1905, its legacies remain. Gaining knowledge from books is still thought of as the best way to lead a successful life and achieve high social recognition. Even today, it is said that ‘[d]espite the growing complexity of the modern Chinese socio-economic environment, the ideal that “all pursuits are of low value; only learning is high” (万般皆下品, 惟有读书高, *wan ban jie xia pin, wei you du shu gao*) still holds true for many [Chinese]’ (Yu et

al. 2012, 8). Within the modern educational system, an ideal intellectual development is translated into a continuous and ascending process of education: primary, secondary, and tertiary. Accomplishing tertiary education is an admirable goal for those who aim to be intellectual elites. Hence, going to university becomes the ‘should-be’ pursuit after secondary education, especially for bright students. The Cultural Revolution disrupted the regular procedure of academic learning. The gap between their high self-expectations and the disappointing realities fed Liang Heng, Gao Yuan and others with resentment and bitterness.

However, the accounts about promising students being squandered are not found in China-based narratives. It is possible to argue that such trauma is a construction of Western-based authors, for, in reality, they were among the lucky cohort of the Cultural Revolution generation. They did not go to university immediately after finishing secondary education, but they were among the early groups who attended university, except Zhu Xiao Di and Anchee Min who were too young at the time to go to university. Jung Chang went down to the countryside in 1969, and through her mother’s efforts got a factory job in her home city in 1972. In 1973 she attended Sichuan University. Ting-xing Ye, who allegorised herself as a ‘leaf in the bitter wind,’ in fact was lucky enough to be recommended to Beijing University as early as 1974. Zhai Zhenhua attended Zhongshan University in Guangzhou province in 1972. Gao Yuan became a university student when universities reopened in 1977 (Gao 1987, 356). Zi-ping Luo obtained permission to stay in Shanghai bearing the responsibility for taking care of her sick father and younger siblings. She passed the examination for graduate study in 1978 and became a graduate student skipping undergraduate courses (Luo 1990, 290–301). Although

personal effort was involved, they were undeniably fortunate for being able to go to university in the 1970s.

However, Liang Heng, Gao Yuan, Zi-ping Luo, Jung Chang, Zhai Zhenhua, Rae Yang, and Ting-xing Ye did not acknowledge their relative good fortune but iterated that their promising lives had been wasted. In contrast, China-based contemporary authors such as Zhang Xincan, Liang Xiaosheng, Shi Tiesheng, and Zhang Chengzhi, who had similar experiences to these nine Western-based authors, did not recount harrowing tales of thwarted opportunities. Zhang Xincan went down to the countryside in 1968 as an ‘educated youth’ and was recommended to go to university in 1973 (Zhang 2003, 256, 344). Liang Xiaosheng went to the Great Northern Wilderness in 1968 and left for Fudan University in Shanghai in 1974. Liang Xiaosheng’s experience was similar to Rae Yang. She also went to the Great Northern Wilderness in 1968 and left there in 1973. Shi Tiesheng went down to Shaanxi province as an ‘educated youth’ in 1969 and returned to Beijing in 1972. In these China-based authors’ personal accounts there is no notion that they were bright and promising students whose lives were wasted during the Cultural Revolution.

With respect to intellectual development, a collection of personal accounts *Some of Us: Chinese Women Growing up in the Mao Era* (Zhong, Wang, and Bai 2001) offers counter-narratives to Liang Heng, Gao Yuan, Zi-ping Luo, Jung Chang, Zhai Zhenhua, Rae Yang, and Ting-xing Ye’s narratives. The co-authors of *Some of Us*—Zhong Xueping, Bai Di, and Xiaomei Chen—lived through the Cultural Revolution, went to universities, and then migrated to the West in the aftermath of the Cultural Revolution. Their life trajectories were almost the same as Jung Chang’s cohort. Xiaomei Chen, for example, left Beijing for the Great Northern Wilderness in 1969 and attended a university in 1973. Now she lives and works in the US. Her life

trajectory is almost the same to Rae Yang's. Despite similar experiences, Xiaomei Chen and her co-authors do not complain about not attending university immediately after the completion of secondary education. On the contrary they think highly of the unexpected outcome from the rustication movement. The experience in the countryside enriched their life experience and deepened their understanding of life and the self, as well as provided them with access to Chinese realities. This kind of reflection expressed in *Some of Us* is absent in the narratives of Jung Chang's cohort.

With respect to being able to go to university, Jung Chang's cohort ascribed it to his or her own efforts and high intelligence. In their accounts, they are persons distinguished from the masses, even from their siblings whom they barely acknowledge. The authors of *Some of Us*, however, provide a different picture regarding Chinese individuals' and public intellectual life during the Cultural Revolution. The accounts in *Some of Us* show that the legacy of the Chinese *kequ* system was manifested in the ubiquitous emphasis on knowledge in Chinese society. Bai Di's parents were very attentive to nurturing her love for reading and knowledge learning (Bai 2001, 92–93). And her love for books was ironically more easily sated during the Cultural Revolution. Free from the surveillance of parents and teachers, Bai Di disposed her time for reading at will. She writes, 'I was free from my parents' surveillance, for they were occupied by the revolution. I, with my buddies, read novels of all kinds, and we shared our parents' collections' (Bai 2001, 93). Bai Di's account is historically feasible. Firstly, the emphasis on learning knowledge is a Chinese tradition and was strengthened as talents were increasingly demanded for building new China. Secondly, modern entertainment devices like television and radio were luxury goods, only available to a limited number of households. Reading books was a popular form of recreation.

Xueping Zhong, another co-author of *Some of Us* recalled how her mother disciplined her to pay attention to intellectual development rather than to how to dress. Her mother told her, ‘it is not important whether a girl is pretty or not, but it’s important that she does well in school and has *zhenbenshi* [real ability]’ (Zhong 2001, 138). Her mother fed her daughter’s *zhenbenshi* with ancient Chinese men of letters, foreign writers and thinkers as models to learn from, including Cao Xueqin, author of the Chinese classic novel *Dream of Red Mansions*, Balzac, and Gogol (Zhong 2001, 139). Her mother’s teaching of *zhenbenshi* became rooted in Xueping Zhong’s mind. As she recalled, her hidden desire for knowledge was soundly awakened in 1971 when some universities reopened. She managed to be enrolled on her *zhenbenshi* (Zhong 2001, 150). Compared with the narratives by Jung Chang and the others, Xueping Zhong’s account provides a broad and balanced view of educated youths’ intellectual life during the Cultural Revolution. At that time, studying was not something remarkable, exclusively enjoyed by Jung Chang and the like, but a more common pursuit.

There was another phenomenon that was largely ignored by Jung Chang’s cohort: the learning of English. Learning English became fashionable in the 1970s due to the changes in international relations and the ‘specific social and political vacuum’ created by the Cultural Revolution, as argued by Ruth Y. Hung who wrote about the Chinese people’s English learning in that period (Hung 2006, 436). Among them, Zhu Xiao Di was the only one who mentioned this. He wrote that a favourable climate for learning English emerged in the 1970s (Zhu 1998, 132–135). Jung Chang and the other seven authors never acknowledged that they exploited the ‘vacuum’ of the Cultural Revolution to meet their own desires and develop intellectually in unexpected ways.

In addition to learning English, Xiaomei Chen states that the educational ‘vacuum’ caused by the Cultural Revolution allowed her to develop art skills, which she could not get from regular schooling. Therefore, Xiaomei Chen argues that intellectual development did not only mean developing solid knowledge from textbooks only obtained in the classroom, but also meant developing social knowledge and knowledge about the self and the world. The experiences during the Cultural Revolution, particularly during the rustication movement, were painful, but also valuable, from which they discovered the self and discovered another China—a poor and backward rural China—different from what they had perceived from their urban lives. On this basis they considered that they had become mature. Being rusticated, going from urban to rural areas, extended the depth and breadth of their understanding of the self and life. They learned to view life within a longer historical span and saw the self within a bigger community (Chen 2001, 53–76). To the authors of *Some of Us*, the rusticated life was something like a spiritual pilgrimage in search of the truth of the self, life, and the world (Zhong, Wang, and Bai 2001).

Xiaomei Chen’s self-understanding is common among the Cultural Revolution generation. For example, the studies of ‘educated youths’ and their literature by Che Hongmei’s 车红梅, Kam Louie and Yihong Pan (Che 2012; Louie 1989; Pan 2003) reveal that, although the emotional and psychological world of ‘educated youths’ was full of tension and conflicts, the rustication experiences were generally positive and rewarding. Former ‘educated youths’ therefore gained insights into the country, the people and their selves.

China-based authors and the authors of *Some of Us* provide a broad historical and cultural scope in their accounts, in which their selves are immersed. In comparison, Liang Heng, Jung Chang, and the other seven authors of this cohort

arranged all content so as to maintain their self as central to their narratives. In this respect their texts follow the format of much Western autobiographical writing. The focus on the self skewed the texts in particular ways. They highlighted the negative impacts of the Cultural Revolution on regular classroom teaching and learning, but were silent on the benefits gained in the void created by the Red Guard movement and the gap year/s off school caused by the rustication movement. Through interpreting the interruption of schooling by referring to the traditional notion of Chinese intellectual development they reconstructed their lives as intellectually victimised selves, hence privileging their subjectivity over broader concerns.

Teenagers materially and emotionally impoverished

The second source of victimisation felt by Liang Heng, Gao Yuan, Jung Chang and others is that during their teenage lives they endured poor material conditions and a lack of daily parental care. Much about their material poverty and lack of emotional support illustrates the bitterness that they suffered under the PRC. In terms of self-perception and expression, while they stressed the trauma arising from harsh material conditions, they identified themselves in reference to the exterior world rather than their interior world. To some extent this is a reflection of their ‘Chineseness.’ They perceived themselves as circumstantial dependants. But their circumstantial dependence is not the same as the circumstantial dependence presented in China-based narratives, for example, the self-accounts collected in *Wasting and Rising*, and Zhang Xincan and Shi Tiesheng’s texts. In China-based narratives, poverty was not a condition endured only by the authors, but also by the majority of Chinese. As for the traumatic sense of a lack of daily parental care, there is no such mention in China-based narratives.

In contrast, in Liang Heng, Jung Chang, and others' narratives, the authors' individual suffering, materially and emotionally, was highlighted, thus emphasising their sense of subjecthood. Rae Yang, however firstly identified herself generationally. She wrote, 'One thing the adults liked to tell my generation when we were young was that we were the most fortunate, because we were born in new China and grew up under the red flag' (Yang 1997, 9). The definition of 'the most fortunate' generation was made not only because Rae Yang's generation was born in the peaceful environment of the new China, but also because it was believed that they would live a happy life in a socialist China. This was, at the time, a convincing definition because when the CPC established the PRC in 1949 it brought to an end the successive wars that had swept the country²⁵ for a century. According to the vision of socialism, a wealthy and comfortable life would be realised under the leadership of the CPC. From this starting point, Rae Yang narrated the personal story of her poor life. Rae Yang's family was relatively well-off because her parents had some savings from their previous work in the Chinese embassy in Switzerland and they had only three children. Despite this background, they had to carefully manage their food supply. Between 1960 and 1962, later called the 'Three Difficult Years,' the PRC faced a serious food shortage. Despite the efforts of the adults to help Rae Yang and her brothers, they still suffered from a lack of sufficient nutrients. In 1961, Rae Yang, then a nine- or ten-year-old girl, appeared very gaunt (Yang 1997, 62).

For Gao Yuan and Zhai Zhenhua, even though their high-ranking parents had food rations supplied by the government, they experienced food scarcity as well. Gao Yuan and Zhai Zhenhua's parents had big families to support. Zhai Zhenhua wrote,

²⁵ The modern history of China featured a succession of wars. They were the First Opium War (1839–1842), the Movement of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom (1851–1864), the Second Opium War (1856–1860), the Sino-French War (1883–1885), the Sino-Japanese War (1894), the Revolution of 1911, the Northern Expedition (1926–1928), the First Chinese Civil War (1927–1937), the War of Resistance Against Japan (1937–1945), and the Second Chinese Civil War (1945–1950).

‘there were eleven of us sharing my parents’ salaries, which would have provided adequately for a normal family of five’ (Zhai 1992, 17). Beside the food shortage, Zhai Zhenhua also recounted how there was no efficient heating in the apartment for the winter, ‘no warm outerwear’ for Beijing’s ‘arctic cold,’ ‘no milk or milk products’ on the food list and no dessert for Zhai Zhenhua’s ‘sweet tooth’ (Zhai 1992, 18). She ‘would have forgotten what meat tasted like if it were not for the once-a-week dumpling dinner’ (Zhai 1992, 18). Gao Yuan’s parents were veteran Communist officials. Gao Yuan’s family settled down in a county in Hebei province. In Gao Yuan’s memory, during the period 1960 to 1962, he ‘often came home from school so hungry that he could no longer stand’ (Gao 1987, 8). When he was in middle school, he could not afford enough food and he would eat a vegetable that he collected freely in the wild.

For the authors living in Shanghai, Zi-ping Luo, Ting-xing Ye, and Anchee Min, their families managed to live on a very tight budget. Anchee Min’s parents’ salaries could not afford enough food for an entire month. ‘We often ran out of food by the end of the month. We would turn into starving animals’ (Min 1993, 21). Zi-ping Luo’s father was the only salary earner, as her mother was sentenced to prison for seven years for hiding her brother’s ‘guilt’ for illegally fleeing to Hong Kong (Luo 1990, 5). Dealing with financial difficulties, meant Zi-ping Luo and her sister became ‘far more capable’ in taking care of their household (Luo 1990, 206). Ting-xing Ye was orphaned at the age of fourteen and had to live on social welfare (Ye 2000[1997], 60, 81,100).

Liang Heng gave a brief account of the food shortage that his family suffered. Jung Chang and Zhu Xiao Di are the exceptions. They were from high-ranked official families. Zhu Xiao Di was the only child who lived together with his parents

and was carefully looked after. He was also only two to four years of age during the food shortage between 1960 and 1962, so he was too young to recall this period. Jung Chang stated that she did not go hungry because her parents 'always gave the children more' (Chang 1993[1991], 307). Her knowledge of famine came from witnessing others starving (Chang 1993[1991], 307–309).

Besides poverty, they also suffered from a lack of parental guidance and emotional support. Their parents were absent during the transition from adolescence to young adulthood, leaving them to manage their own growth. In these narratives, the authors paint a general picture of parents always busy with work or recurrent political campaigns. The Cultural Revolution forcefully drove teenage students into the mass movement, which sped up their pace of maturation in an abnormal way. Jung Chang said, 'The Cultural Revolution had deprived me of, or spared me, a normal girlhood with tantrums, bickerings, and boyfriends' (Chang 1993[1991], 485). Similar sentiments are shared in the other texts, though the levels and source of trauma varied.

Liang Heng's father divorced Liang Heng's mother for fear that the stain of her political activity would affect the political future of the other family members (Liang and Shapiro 1983, 9–15). She was branded a 'rightist' in the 1957 'Hundred Flower' campaign (Liang and Shapiro 1983, 8). Gradually, Liang Heng lost his mother's material and emotional support. As a thirteen-year-old living alone, he had to take responsibility for his own life, which became an adventure for the teenage boy (Liang and Shapiro 1983, 138–139, 141–143). He recalled that he lived like a street hoodlum surviving at the bottom of society. He wrote, 'My life was like a feather to me, floating on thrills, wine, cigarettes, and curses' (Liang and Shapiro 1983, 149–154). He was allowed to live with 'freedom,' but the 'freedom' was

‘bitter’ (Liang and Shapiro 1983, 154). With reference to the lack of parental care, Liang Heng expressed deep sadness.

Similarly, Gao Yuan, Zhai Zhenhua, and Rae Yang also wrote of having little time with their parents, either because they attended boarding school or because their parents were preoccupied with assigned work. Gao Yuan wrote, ‘Papa had never spent much time with us children because of the demands of his work’ (Gao 1987, 10). Rae Yang described her busy parents: ‘they worked for it [Communism] with such zeal that they forgot their meals, took no nap in the middle of the day, and often “spun round the axle,” a phrase coined at the time to mean working through the night into the day and then through the day into the night’ (Yang 1997, 53). Preoccupied with work, their parents passed on parental responsibility to nannies, kindergarten nurses, or grandparents, or simply left their children on their own. Rae Yang said that she was closer to her nanny than to her mother. Jung Chang’s grandmother took more responsibility for caring for the children and the household. Jung Chang recounted that the kindergarten nurses accused her mother of behaving like a stepmother because she was often the last one to come to pick up her child (Chang 1993[1991], 268). Gao Yuan’s grandfather was in charge of handling daily life for him and his siblings. Gao Yuan’s father devoted his heart and soul to the peasants. Gao Yuan complained that his father loved the farmers more than he loved his children (Gao 1987, 105). Since little time was spent with his father, Gao Yuan became habituated to making his own decisions without turning to his father for advice. This had a serious consequence. He turned a deaf ear to his father’s warning against getting involved in violent fights between the Red Guard factions (Gao 1987, 246–247). Because his side was defeated, he came close to death. He was victimised

both physically and mentally. He was brutally beaten and had to beg for his life at the cost of his self-respect (Gao 1987, 338–339).

Zi-ping Luo and Anchee Min were from intellectual families. Their self-portrayals convey the role they played in their family on behalf of their parents. Despite being teenagers themselves, they took responsibility for taking care of their families. Anchee Min became ‘an adult from the age of five’ (Min 1993, 13). Zi-ping Luo did the housework, appealing against the unfair treatment of her sick father, her sister and herself (Luo 1990, 13, 41, 68, 87–92). Tears, panic, hopelessness, and anger filled her narrative about her teenage years (Luo 1990, 21, 30, 34–36, 39–41, 46, 49). Since Zi-ping Luo and Anchee Min had to act as adults at home, they themselves did not enjoy any daily parental care.

Another issue that distinguishes texts written and published in the West from those written and published in China is the focus on sexuality. In the Western texts it is supposed that the Cultural Revolution interrupted the normal development of one’s sexuality. In the China-based narratives, however, sexuality is seldom mentioned, and when it is mentioned, it is not in a way that privileges an individual’s sexuality. In the texts written by the Western-based Chinese, it is made explicit that a direct product of the lack of parental companionship in their teenage years was the irregular development of their sexuality. Some of them thereby had an unhappy marriage after they grew up. Their first knowledge of their sexuality was gained in intertwinement with their political activities. Liang Heng’s first love affair happened during the year 1968 when he led an adventurous life in a street gang. The sixteen-year-old leader had a girlfriend, which shocked fourteen-year-old Liang Heng because a teenage love affair was socially disapproved of and forbidden for teenagers younger than eighteen years of age. The leader’s love affair awoke Liang Heng’s sexual awareness.

Liang wrote, ‘When I had conquered my embarrassment I discovered another emotion: envy’ (Liang and Shapiro 1983, 150). Subjectively and objectively Liang Heng intervened in this love affair. The leader asked Liang Heng to correct his love letter, which Liang Heng was willing to do for him. In Liang Heng’s eyes, this was a mutually beneficial thing and even more rewarding for him. Because it consolidated his friendship with the leader, it could not only offer Liang Heng better protection but also allow him to share his leader’s love story, which provided him with a sense of vicarious enjoyment (Liang and Shapiro 1983, 149–151).

Gao Yuan developed a friendship with the girl classmate that shared a desk with him (Liang and Shapiro 1983, 149–151). The Red Guards labelled the girl’s parents as capitalist intellectuals and ransacked her house for the ‘Four Olds.’ His parents’ misery made Gao Yuan feel guilty, for he himself was a Red Guard too (Gao 1987, 100). For self-protection, Gao Yuan had to be very cautious not to let others know that he offered help to his classmate (Gao 1987, 101). The pressure of class struggle repressed his blossoming puppy love. Moreover, before Gao Yuan could make sense of love he was confronted by the sexual relations of others. Gao Yuan’s Red Guard peers accidentally discovered an extramarital affair between two of their teachers and forced them to confess in detail. This was Gao Yuan’s introduction to sex (Gao 1987, 70–71).

A little different from Liang Heng and Gao Yuan’s accounts of sexual awareness, Jung Chang, Zi-ping Luo, Zhai Zhenhua, and Ting-xing Ye made it clear that the political interference in their private lives during the Cultural Revolution led later to broken marriages or negatively impacted their romantic affairs. Zi-ping Luo and Jung Chang simply barred themselves from romantic affairs (Chang 1993[1991], 524, 545–546; Luo 1990, 234–235, 299). Zhai Zhenhua and Ting-xing Ye’s first

marriages broke down. Zhai Zhenhua recounted, 'By then I was twenty-six years old. I hadn't met a fit [suitable] man, and I saw no possibility of meeting one in the future given the mess made by the Cultural Revolution' (Zhai 1992, 244). Ting-xing Ye's ex-husband developed a gay relationship with a workmate in the countryside during the time of the rustication movement (Ye 2000[1997], 391–393).

Anchee Min realised her homosexuality while she worked on a farm as an 'educated youth.' A devoted couple were accused of having an illicit premarital sexual relationship. For this accusation the man paid with his life, and the girl went insane (Min 1993, 54–58). However, this sad event sped up eighteen-year-old Anchee Min's awareness of sexuality. Partially because of the suppression of sexual consciousness and partially for the purpose of earning political benefits, Anchee Min developed a lesbian relationship with her female leader (Min 1993, 82–116, 158, 164–186). Later, she again exploited this love affair as a rung on the ladder to her goal of playing the leading role in the drama, 'Red Azalea,' a pet project of Mao's wife, Jiang Qing (Min 1993, 203–219). Notwithstanding China's already conservative understanding of heteronormativity, and disavowal of gay and lesbian relationships, Anchee Min's text and other texts express the common theme that sexual maturity developed in an even more unusual manner, resulting in unhappy marriages and miserable memories.

In sum, these authors portray their formative years as characterised by scarcity of both material and emotional support. When they needed support from teachers and parents in their transition from adolescence to adulthood, the Cultural Revolution disrupted schooling and expelled their parents from their lives in the name of revolutionary work or political campaigns. The supposedly smooth and expected trajectory of self-growth was distorted. It is in the interest of portraying

their own subjectivity that these Western-based authors highlight their material, emotional and psychological impoverishment. They constructed pitiful tales of their lives in the PRC. However, their China-based contemporaries, who lived through the same social, historical, and political era, interpreted these experiences differently, with less focus on personal suffering and individuality, and more stress on how this era provided learning experiences.

For the first generation who were born around the founding year of the PRC, insufficient and low-quality material conditions were widespread. Even after thirty years of socioeconomic development, there still exists, in a general sense, a significant gap in material conditions between today's China and developed Western countries. A life of poverty is commonly described in China-based self-narratives, as well as in other forms of literature. For example, Zhan Xincan's diary reflects how her extended family managed their life with scarce materials. Her narrative paints a picture of an ordinary Chinese family during the time of the Cultural Revolution: although food was always inadequate, life still contained much brightness (Zhang 2003, 35–36). By contrast, in Liang Heng, Gao Yuan, Zhai Zhenhua and other Western-based writers' autobiographies, poor living conditions victimised them, and their lives were gloomy.

It is arguable that Jung Chang and her cohort propounded a sense of victimhood from the perspective of their relatively affluent lives in the West, and overlooked the context of their own privilege when in China. They ignored the then Chinese economic situation and stripped the broader historical and socioeconomic context from their own lives. When the PRC was founded in 1949, a hundred years of continual warfare had taken its toll. It had been the world's largest economy for almost two thousand years before the US took over this role in the 1890s (Maddison

1998, 39). From the 1840s on, China experienced consistent wars and colonial exploitation. The national economy was shattered. ‘China’s share of world GDP fell from a third to one-twentieth. Its real per capita income fell from parity to a quarter of the world average’ (Maddison 1998, 39). The per capita annual income in 1949 was only US\$0.27.²⁶ The CPC state inherited a ‘bruised and battered nation’ and a tattered country (Grasso, Corrin, and Kort 1991, 141).

The population at the end of 1949 was 542 million,²⁷ making up 22.5 per cent of the world population at that time. Four million urban people were unemployed and forty million in rural areas were poverty-stricken.²⁸ The national economic recession and decline in productivity were severe in 1949. Worsened by catastrophic flooding in the summer of 1949, the national economy persistently slipped down. Agricultural and industrial production declined sharply. Compared with the best years in China’s history, agricultural production was 25 per cent lower, and industrial production was 50 per cent lower. Factories broke down. Transportation was blocked. Daily supplies were in crucial shortage. Inflation was rampant and the rate of unemployment stayed high.²⁹ In 1952, China’s GDP was even lower than in 1820, which was in stark contrast to economies elsewhere in the world.

For the Chinese people at that time, food was the uppermost issue. However, this context was not explained in Liang Heng, Jung Chang and other Western-based writers’ narratives. They decontextualised their individual lives from China’s national socioeconomic background. However, the sadness derived from not living wealthy and comfortable lives is not expressed in China-based narratives. It is here

²⁶ See *Mao Zedong zhuan* 毛泽东传, 1949–1976. edited by Jin Chongji 金冲及, Beijing 北京: Zhonggong zhongyang wenxian yanjiushi 中国中央文献研究室.

<http://cpc.people.com.cn/GB/69112/70190/70192/70271/4766159.html>. Retrieved on 18 November 2016.

²⁷ See ‘China’s Population,’ http://www.gov.cn/test/2005-07/26/content_17363.htm. Retrieved on 28 May 2014.

²⁸ See ‘Three years’ Recovery of the National Economy: Opening a New Page of New China’s Economic Construction,’ <http://www.zgdsww.com/?p=176&a=view&r=3232>. Retrieved on 3 April 2014.

²⁹ Ibid.

where we see evidence of the tension in these texts arising from both Western and Chinese influences. On the one hand, the Western-influenced texts construct a unified self and the development of that self through time, where the focus remains on an individual's subjectivity and interiority. On the other hand, Chinese cultural and literary traditions are perhaps apparent where this sense of a unified self is situated relative to the broader sociocultural environment in which the subject is enmeshed. While it is arguable that this tension is a feature of any autobiography, it is the particularities of these relational contexts that highlight the 'Chineseness,' so to speak, of these narratives, in addition to their Western influences.

A generation 'brainwashed'

The third complaint expressed by Liang Heng, Jung Chang, and the other seven Western-based writers is that they were 'brainwashed' by the CPC's socialist education and propaganda. They became unwitting followers of the CPC's authority. In a similar way to how they interpreted the self as being materially and emotionally impoverished in the PRC, this aspect of their lives is also contextualised through familiar anti-Communist Western rhetoric. They tailor their descriptions according to a ready, Western-oriented concept of their selves as victims of Communism.

For example, instead of recounting the significant role of kindergartens in freeing Chinese women from housework, as mentioned by the authors of *Some of Us*, Xiaomei Chen and Jiang Jin (cited in Zhong, Wang, and Bai 2001, 57,100), Liang Heng and Jung Chang interpreted kindergartens as institutions that suppressed children's personal development and intentionally deprived them of parental care. Four-year-old Liang Heng writes of being an innate lover of freedom who could not stand surveillance and the constraints of the kindergarten nurses so much that he sought a triumphal escape. He writes, 'I exploded out the door into the dazzling light

of freedom' (Liang and Shapiro 1983, 3). Jung Chang instinctively developed a series of techniques to protest against being sent to the kindergarten, such as howling, kicking, screaming against being sent home, and making trouble deliberately in the kindergarten (Chang 1993[1991], 258, 275). Jung Chang was able to conjure a physical reaction against the kindergarten by 'catching' a fever when needed (Chang 1993[1991], 275).

In Zi-ping Luo, Jung Chang, and Ting-xing Ye's accounts, the CPC state during the Cultural Revolution prohibited freedom of choice. Although they were not interested in the Cultural Revolution movement, all of them were forced to participate. Life for them was miserable. Zi-ping Luo complained that life was wretched, human rights were violated, and intellectuals were devalued (Luo 1990, 30, 34, 102); Jung Chang articulated that life under Mao was fearful (Chang 1993[1991], 675); Ting-xing Ye portrayed female and class discrimination due to Confucian culture and the class theory adopted by the CPC (Ye 2000[1997]). Living under such oppression, they could not exercise their innate sense of subjectivity, even though it was a sense of their own individual qualities that enabled them to emerge triumphant from the rigours they had endured.

For Liang Heng, Gao Yuan, Zhai Zhenhua, and Rae Yang, the deprivation of subjectivity was demonstrated by their participation in the Cultural Revolution. They became active Red Guards, which was the product of the long-term indoctrination of Chinese socialist education and Communist propaganda. They had been 'brainwashed' so that they blindly followed the call of the government. They blamed Mao and the CPC, criticising Mao's tyranny and the totalitarianism of the CPC as the architects of their victimisation. Liang Heng concluded his story saying that it was 'blind obedience' to the state that made the Cultural Revolution happen (Liang and

Shapiro 1983, 292). Zhai Zhenhua wrote, 'In September 1976 Mao Zedong died. I felt less bitterness towards him by then, but still secretly rejoiced at his death. China could finally move ahead without him' (Zhai 1992, 243). Furthermore, she noted that 'had Mao recanted [his mistakes] at the last moment, I would have forgiven him' (Zhai 1992, 243). Rae Yang expressed disillusionment towards the CPC. She was aggrieved and anguished because of her previous loyalty to the CPC, thinking it had fooled her (Yang 1997, 265).

These criticisms of Chinese socialist education and CPC propaganda are a mirror of anti-Communist rhetoric. They divorced Chinese socialist education and CPC propaganda from the Chinese historical and cultural backgrounds. The generation that Jung Chang, Rae Yang and other authors belong to fully expected to inherit and carry on the socialistic cause that their parent's generation had secured. To build an egalitarian society, selflessness was promoted as the essence of socialistic morals. Willingness to devote oneself to others, whether other people or the state, was indoctrinated in various forms, such as circulating heroic stories of those dedicated to the socialistic cause, and pedagogical activities. Self-reflection, criticism, and self-criticism were the practical ways to cultivate these moral values. It was on the grounds of this idealism and the moral of selflessness that Rae Yang, for example, actively engaged in the Cultural Revolution. However, along with criticising the CPC and considering her conduct during the Cultural Revolution as a result of being fooled by it, she could find no justification for any of her actions during the Cultural Revolution. She was not only 'fooled' by Mao and the CPC, but also 'brainwashed' by socialist education.

Although Communism in China was grounded in Marxist class theories, it grew on and from the 'soil' of traditional Chinese ethics. There is a natural

compatibility between Chinese collectivistic values and Marxist care for the proletariat. Overwhelmed by the urge to build an independent and powerful state, and fear for the security of regime, the CPC intensified the indoctrination of selflessness, self-sacrifice to collectivistic interests, loyalty to the ideal of egalitarian socialism and other values. Heroic stories were propagated of those who sacrificed themselves for the mission of establishing the new China. Activities for fostering empathy with poor people and cultivating selflessness were organised. Self-examination and ‘criticism–and–self-criticism’ to remove individualistic thoughts and actions were common forms of socialist education. Zhan Xincan’s diary records that she constantly examined herself to cultivate selflessness (Zhang 2003).

As a matter of fact, Chinese socialist education and the CPC’s propaganda were the products of localising Marxist ideology by the CPC under Mao’s leadership. The localisation of Marxism absorbed much from Chinese cultural and social traditions (Grasso, Corrin, and Kort 1991, 144). For example, self-criticism might derive from Wang Yangming’s 王阳明 (1472–1529) Neo-Confucian School of Mind. Its core idea is ‘the unity of learning and practice’ (Wang and Henke 1916, 41), which proposes that man attains knowledge by means of practice, and conversely, performance is the manifestation of knowledge. Combining Marxist class thought and neo-Confucianism, Mao developed an eclectic statecraft embodied in two essential strategies during the Yan’an period of the 1940s: ‘mass line’ and ‘thought reform’ (Schwartz 1960, 615). The CPC’s military and political success has proved the validity of ‘thought reform’ and ‘mass line’³⁰ in dealing with Chinese problems, particularly for the new regime. Therefore, political campaigns were

³⁰The mass line (from the Chinese *qunzhong luxian* 群众路线) is the political, organizational and leadership method developed by Mao Zedong and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) during the Chinese revolution. The essential element of the mass line is consulting the masses, interpreting their suggestions within the framework of Marxist-Leninism, and then enforcing the resulting policies, although it may no longer closely resemble the original suggestion. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mass_line. Retrieved on 28 May 2017.

frequently launched in the Maoist era as an effective way of dealing with problems faced by the young PRC. As a result, to a certain extent, the Chinese masses became inured to frequent political campaigns.

Oddly enough, Liang Heng, Gao Yuan, Jung Chang, and other Western-based authors who lived through Mao's era either expressed alienation toward socialist indoctrination, or interpreted their previous actions as the result of being 'brainwashed.' Bill Willmott, a specialist in Chinese studies, was born in Chengdu, China—Jung Chang's home city—and finished secondary education there before he left China for the US. He argued that Jung Chang's autobiography was unreliable. He pointed out that Jung Chang was once an active Red Guard. Only after she lost the privilege she enjoyed thanks to her parents' political status as CPC officials, did she change her political attitude and come to hate Mao as a 'monster' (Willmott 2009, 176). But she portrayed herself as a person who kept her distance from the Cultural Revolution at the very beginning because she was an independent thinker. Mobo Gao also argued that Jung Chang fabricated some stories and distorted the CPC as a totalitarian monster controlling its people tightly (see Gao 2009, 131).

Apart from distortedly interpreting their experiences, Jung Chang's cohort emphasised the CPC's 'brainwashing' of their generation. One testimony of this is that they either do not mention or understate an important element of indoctrination: 'Learning from Comrade Lei Feng.' Lei Feng was set up as an iconic figure of the Chinese socialist education. Lei Feng (1940–1962) was a real person who survived the old China and started a new and happy life in the new China. Out of gratitude towards the CPC and Mao, he devoted himself to diligent work, and serving the collective. He helped countless people. His virtuous actions were discovered after he died from an accident in 1962. In 1963 Mao wrote the inscription: 'Learning from

Comrade Lei Feng.’ Lei Feng became a posthumous model for selflessness, modesty, and loyalty to Mao and the CPC. His motto written in his diary ‘became every teenager’s watchword in the 1960s’ (Gao 1994, 31). It says:

Like Spring [upper case in original], I treat my comrades warmly.

Like summer, I am full of ardour for my revolutionary work.

I eliminate individualism as an autumn gale sweeping away fallen leaves. And to the class enemy, I am cruel and ruthless like harsh winter

(quoted in Gao 1994, 31)

Lei Feng’s virtuous actions were highly praised. Mao’s inscription ‘Learning from Comrade Lei Feng’ initiated enthusiasm for emulating him. His actions were copied; his words were circulated. However, this energetic response attracted only passing mention in Zhai Zhenhua and Zhu Xiao Di’s texts (Zhai 1992, 40–41; Zhu 1998, 31–32). Although Zhai Zhenhua talked of Lei Feng’s story and the movement, she did not explicitly articulate that she identified personally with Lei Feng’s values and the justification for the indoctrination of ‘Learning From Comrade Lei Feng.’ Zhu Xiao Di is the only one of these nine authors that offered a positive evaluation of Lei Feng. For example, he praised Lei Feng’s ‘volunteer work’ and laments the disappearance of these virtues in today’s China (Zhu 1998, 32).

In contrast to Liang Heng, Gao Yuan, Jung Chang, Ting-xing Ye and so on, Xiaomei Chen recalled emulating Lei Feng by ‘doing good deeds.’ Her account indicates that the movement of ‘Learning From Comrade Lei Feng’ extended into the years of the Cultural Revolution, at least during the first stage. In 1969 on the train to

the Great Northern Wilderness, Xiaomei Chen persisted in ‘doing good deeds’ for the people around her (Chen 2001, 70). If the veil of socialist ideology is removed, the ethics that were indoctrinated through Chinese socialist education are still valorised. The essence of ‘socialist ethics’ is a humanist universality that has deep roots in Confucianism. It assumes that considering the individual within the collectivistic scope and devoting the individual to public benefit would create a harmonious society, and in return, the individual benefits. Such moral-oriented culture, in Henry Rosemont, Jr., is in accord with ‘our basic moral intuitions’ and thus superior to capitalist culture in the contemporary West (Rosemont 2004, 54).

Zhang Haidi (1955–), a contemporary Chinese writer, is honoured as the ‘New Lei Feng of the 1980s’ (Dauncey 2013, 187). She has been paralysed since early childhood. She taught herself to be a translator, writer, and physician. In the 1980s, she offered medical service to the local people, for free and sincerely like Lei Feng, and like Lei Feng she became another subject to emulate (Dauncey 2013). However, in the West, the image of ‘Lei Feng’ is deconstructed and criticised as ‘a product of China’s propaganda machine.’³¹ Similarly, Zhang Haidi is also criticised as a puppet of Communist propaganda for the ‘socialist spiritual civilisation’ of the 1980s (Dauncey 2013, 191). As Gao observes, comments in favour of China’s socialistic ideology would be attacked as ‘ugly Chinese propaganda’ or the product of being ‘brainwashed’ (Gao 2009, 128, 129). In fact, to a great extent, the political implication of socialistic education had a limited impact on children, as they were not politically knowledgeable or socialised enough to make sense of the political implications. Bai Di thinks that she gained more courage from the stories of heroes for the humanistic spirit they presented, such as Pavel Korchagin’s *How Steel Is*

³¹ See ‘April Fooled: No, Chinese Communist Icon Lei Feng Is Not Loved by the U.S. Military.’ <http://blogs.wsj.com/chinarealtime/2015/01/06/april-fooled-chinese-ex-journalist-tries-to-quash-rumors-lei-feng-loved-by-u-s-military/>. Retrieved on 19 November 2016.

Tempered (1936) (Bai 2001, 93). But writing within the rhetoric of ‘brainwashing’ under Communism that prevails in the West, these nine diasporic writers negated any virtues of the CPC’s socialist education. Instead, these authors portrayed themselves as the victims of CPC ‘brainwashing,’ by selecting only those experiences that supported this interpretation, and omitting those that did not.

Distinguished from the narratives of Liang Heng’s cohort which eschewed any positive attributes of China’s socialist education or acknowledgement that such values at least in part arose from China’s ancient cultural heritage, China-based texts, such as Zhang Xincan’s *A Diary of a Red Adolescent Girl*, exude a nostalgia for these values and spiritual state: collective passion for building a socialist society, sincere devotion to rural development, accepting re-education from peasants, and so on. She wrote that although it was hard to make a solid interpretation of past experience, she appreciated the era when their lives were full of passion for pursuing truth, ideals, and a belief in collectivistic heroism (Zhang 2003, 24). She expressed a deep concern about Chinese society, which was being increasingly changed by the introduction of Western individualism, materialism, and consumerism during the 1980s Reform era. Exposed to these Western influences, the Chinese socialistic value system was under immense pressure. It was because of such concern that a collective nostalgia emerged and was expressed in literature in China in the 1990s (Yang 2003). But, for Western-based writers, isolated from this resistance to Western influences of individualism in China in the 1990s, they continued interpreting their lives within the framework of denouncing the Cultural Revolution, and deployed the ready discourse of Western anti-Communism in recounting their stories of being ‘brainwashed’ by the CPC state. As exemplified by Jung Chang, Rae Yang, Liang

Heng, et al., they selectively narrated their life experiences to construct stories of being 'brainwashed' in Communist China.

Chapter Six

The Cultural Revolution generation's texts: entangled selves of authors

This chapter considers the authorial 'I' of autobiography. Chapter Four discussed the 'I' of hero/heroine—the narrated 'I.' Chapter Five discussed the 'I' as narrator—the narrating 'I.' According to Françoise Lionnet, the narrated 'I' is the subject of history and the narrating 'I' is the agent of discourse (Lionnet 1989, 193). Both are 'not a flesh-and-blood author, whom we cannot know, but a speaker or narrator' marking self-referentiality, as Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson suggest (2010[2001], 58). Each 'I' is symbolically configured into the narrative and constitutes a version of the self. Being the performer of the autobiographical act, the authorial 'I' determines what to include and how so, and in this way controls the self they wish to reveal. As the autobiographical 'I' is historically and culturally situated, we need to place the author/narrator in the historical and cultural moments from which s/he, the author, emerges to shed more light on how the narrated 'I' is constructed.

The nine authors from the Cultural Revolution generation, Liang Heng, Gao Yuan, Zi-ping Luo, Jung Chang, Zhai Zhenhua, Anchee Min, Rae Yang, Ting-xing Ye, and Zhu Xiao Di, left China for the US, Canada, New Zealand, and the UK in their twenties or thirties during the late 1970s or early 1980s. Culturally they moved from a collectivistic society to an individualistic one. Western societies prioritise individuality over communality as the predominant way of self-identification, at least since the Enlightenment. According to the sociologist Geert Hofstede, the US, Australia, the UK, and Canada are the countries that prize individualistic values,

such as personal freedom and self-fulfilment, the most. By contrast, China and Singapore, among other Asian countries, are the countries that value social conformity and harmony the most (Hofstede 1991, 49–78; 2011, 11–12/26). When these authors moved from China to the West, they moved from a society that highly valued collectivistic self-recognition to societies highly valuing individualistic self-recognition. The cultural gap that they were confronted with was significantly wide.

The individual in individualistic cultures is privileged and construed as the fundamental unity of society (Giddens 1991, 54–76). Self-knowledge is based on discovering one's unique innate attributes through introspection. The self is understood to 'be rooted in a set of internal attributes such as abilities, talents, personality traits, preferences, subjective feelings states, and attitudes,' which embody the meanings of the individual (Markus, Mullally, and Kitayama 1997, 22). So the individualist self is presented as an independent, autonomous, and self-sufficient entity in Western autobiography. People affiliated with individualism tend to express and affirm their unique attributes as the basis for defining the self. They describe their selves regarding what they do, rather than who they are (Markus, Mullally, and Kitayama 1997, 22–23). Over time and through life's vicissitudes, a sense of the unity of one's subjecthood constructs the individual. The capacity to exert subjectivity is interpreted as a positive inner force leading to self-success.

Chinese society is shaped by the long history of collectivistic culture. Even today, globalisation and its Western baggage have not altogether displaced China's collectivistic leanings. Chinese people, as a whole, still perceive themselves in terms of their relationship to others and their role in social networks. In compliance with the hierarchical and holistic concept of society in Confucianism, and the universe in Daoism, Chinese individuals perceive themselves as component parts of society and

the universe. Society in China is constructed in a hierarchical form, with the nation, families, and individuals in a descendant order. In a general sense, identifying the self with society arises from Confucian ideals while identifying the self with nature arises from Daoist philosophy. Confucian ideals incline one towards a collectivist morality in individual attitudes and behaviours. Daoist philosophy espouses a more individuated self in affinity with nature.

Individualism and collectivism since the Cold War era have been taken as ideological symbols for two broad sociopolitical systems: capitalism and Communism. Individualistic societies tend to privilege the individual over communitarian values. For instance, most Americans think that the greatness of their country is thanks to its liberty and individualism. On the contrary, in China, individualism is considered to be equivalent to selfishness and is disdained (Munro 1985, 2). This was particularly so during the Maoist era.

Writing at this cultural and historical moment and in the transnational context, Liang Heng, Gao Yuan, Jung Chang, and the other six Western-based texts reveal the influences of both Chinese (communitarian) and Western (individual) cultures on their self-perceptions. In terms of three layers of self-identification—the national self, familial self, and individual self—three kinds of self-identification are simultaneously present in their narratives, with each kind of self-identification varying in degree. Overall, it is the author's sense of individual subjecthood that prevails. This is demonstrated by the deep sorrow felt for the interruption to their schooling, their sense of being a victim, and their loss of privileges, which they saw as entitlements. Thus, the narrated 'I' and the narrating 'I' suggest that the authorial 'I' is primarily identified with the author's individual self. But, among these nine texts, Rae Yang's *Spider Eaters*, Jung Chang's *Wild Swans*, and Anchee Min's *Red*

Azalea are distinctive in the way that Rae Yang's sense of national identity, Jung Chang's familial self, and Anchee Min's elaboration of her personal selfhood are discernible.

Spider Eaters: a national self

Rae Yang's *Spider Eaters* offers a strong sense of the self in relation to the Chinese country and its people. She is concerned with the social duty indoctrinated by Chinese socialist education, as well as inequality. She firmly identified with the ethos of her whole generation: they were the inheritors and bearers of the socialist cause. The socialist collectivist values, such as self-sacrifice for the nation, had been planted deeply in their minds at a tender age. Rae Yang's identity was formed in the forge of socialist collectivism. For her, the national welfare was her supreme pursuit, surpassing the lower levels of self-identification: the familial self and individual self. She was convinced that sacrificing individual interests to the national interest was her duty, and she was determined to do so. Her sense of the national self, and the responsibilities arising from that, resulted in all that she did during the Cultural Revolution, including participating in the violent Red Guard activities and volunteering to go down to the harshest countryside and to do the toughest jobs. She sincerely devoted herself to the needs of the country on the call of the CPC government. For the ultimate ideal she prioritised her collective self over her individual self, as demonstrated by her not caring for her personal hygiene and her feminine image, which were considered bourgeois tastes. It was not until her idealism was destroyed by the brutal reality that she started to care about her personal interests. However, her perception of the self in relation to the country was deeply rooted in her self-perception, even after she migrated to the West.

Rae Yang borrowed the metaphor 'spider eaters' from Lu Xun (1881–1936). Lu Xun is considered the greatest writer in modern Chinese literature. In the 1920s–1930s' New Cultural Movement, he was a leading writer who advocated using new literature to build 'a new order' for Chinese society so as to 'save' China from economic and political bankruptcy (Goldman 1977, 1). Deep concerns about the national fate are conveyed in his literature. He was more a writer than an anguished patriot. In awakening the Chinese nation's awareness to what he saw as the impending national crisis, he played an influential role and therefore won considerable respect in China. He is honoured as 'the soul of China,' whose 'pen was mightier than the sword' (Mills 1977, 189).

Lu Xun used the metaphor 'spider eaters' to refer to national pioneers who would risk their personal interests and try every means to save China from bankruptcy. They are like the pioneer who risks his/her life to taste a spider. His/her hazardous trial advises people that the spider is not dreadfully poisonous, but tastes bitter and thus is not a suitable food. Using this metaphor to allegorise herself and her generation, Rae Yang implies that her generation had paid a high cost for the national sake. What Rae Yang's cohort experienced during the Cultural Revolution is something like tasting a spider, and her cohort were the 'eaters.' Certainly that bitterness is not worth tasting again. This is the lesson that Rae Yang and her cohort learned, and is also the lesson that China should learn from the Cultural Revolution. This explanation of their past is based on perceiving the individual in terms of his/her relationship to the nation. And the interpretation of drawing the 'lesson' aligns with a Daoist interpretation of suffering: a transcendent understanding of trauma. It is demonstrated by Rae Yang's citation of a Chinese saying: 'Bitter medicine cures

illness' (Yang 1997, 285). It means that although medicine tastes bitter, it is ultimately beneficial for curing illness. Bitterness is the cost for curing illness.

Rae Yang recognises the significance of her experience during the Cultural Revolution, like 'eating spiders,' but only partially. Originally, Lun Xun used the metaphor 'spider eaters' to praise Rae Yang's parents' generation, who devoted themselves to the national cause of independence. It symbolises the sense of the national self and the selflessness of Chinese individuals for the national welfare. Rae Yang wrote, 'Using Lun Xun's metaphor, I and my peers are the ones who ate spiders. Long before we did, my parents and their peers had eaten spiders too' (Yang 1997, 284). It is clear that she identifies herself and her generation with her parents' generation. But contradictorily, she rejects the sense of the national self carried by the metaphor 'spider eater.' This is why after she cites 'Bitter medicine cures illness,' she immediately retreats from Chinese collectivistic values and extols the virtues of Western individualism.

While retaining the humanist and transcendent interpretation of 'eating spiders,' which stems from Chinese philosophical thought, Rae Yang argues it was the taste of this experience that made her cherish freedom all the more. She wrote, the 'spiders' that she tasted during the Cultural Revolution 'made my head cooler and my eyes brighter. Because of them, I cherish freedom and value human dignity. I have become more tolerant of different opinions' (Yang 1997, 285). Personal freedom is one of the values stressed in Western individualistic culture (Hofstede 1991, 49–78) and in notions of Western subjecthood (Foucault 1997[1984]). Rae Yang's victorious feeling of gaining freedom for her subjecthood demonstrates the influence of Western culture on her self-understanding. Relying on claiming personal freedom, she reclaims her subjecthood. She resumes the privileged sense of

subjectivity by drawing herself away from a sense of national responsibility. This recovery of a sense of self as an individual demonstrates a tension within Rae Yang's narrative caused by two different cultural systems. Although the sense of individual self dominates her self-expression as she chooses to affiliate with Western individualistic culture, the sense of the national self as the result of being once steeped in Chinese collectivistic culture has shaped a fundamental part of her self. It does not emerge often but stubbornly persists.

The tension caused by the stubbornness of Rae Yang's sense of a national part of self, and her realised and dominant individual self, is not only embodied in the metaphor 'spider eater,' but also in what she recounts and how. Most of her recollections are outwardly concerned with the nation, but through these concerns she reveals her inner self. The former reveals that Rae Yang's concern is mainly situated in the national domain, which is evidence of the influence of Chinese collectivistic culture on her self-perception. The latter reflects the influence of the Western preoccupation of 'finding the self, or demonstrating the self's ability to transcend or advantageously harness the vicissitudes of life' (Rolls 1995, 3).

Unlike the other Western-based authors of her cohort, such as Jung Chang, Liang Heng, and Gao Yuan whose recollections are personal affairs, Rae Yang's recollections are mainly of her experiences in relation to the 'indoctrinated' cause of building Chinese socialism, rather than her personal life or family stories. She recounted the whole ethos of her generation: the inheritors and bearers of the socialist cause. Her national sense of self was formed in the forge of socialist collectivism. Thus, national welfare became her supreme pursuit, surpassing the lower levels of self-identification: the familial self and individual self. Although she related some family anecdotes, which could be read as evidence of the legacy of

Chinese collectivistic familial roles, Rae Yang does not elaborate these roles beyond the self as Jung Chang does (see below).

Rae Yang opines that the socialist collectivistic values, such as self-sacrifice to the nation, had been planted deeply in the minds of Rae Yang's cohort at a tender age. Yang's interest in narrating affairs concerning herself in relation to the national cause of building socialism in China illustrates her national self-identification. Although she made negative assessments of her past, it is no doubt that she situated herself in the context of national affairs rather than in private ones. However, even here we might see the influence of her exposure to Western literary devices. Within modern Western autobiographies the world depicted beyond the self is usually heterogeneous. It is a disparate and diverse world encompassing an array of choices, opportunities and experiences. But the autobiographies of oppressed peoples seldom depict the external world in this way. The world beyond the self that they depict is portrayed as homogeneous. It is uniform, oppressive and dire (see Rolls 1995, 10; Rosenblatt 1976, 170). Additionally, Rae Yang was concerned with revealing her self through exploring her interiority. Her narrative is one of introspection. This introspection occurs immediately after any incident she describes. Her account begins with talking about her insomnia, which is apparently pertinent to her interiority. She reflected that during her fifteen years in the US she had been tortured by nightmares left by her experiences during the Cultural Revolution, and the newly emergent nightmares that she suffered were because she was an outsider in the US. (Yang 1997, 1). Starting from this point, Rae Yang begins her retrospective account, as illustrated by the following excerpt:

This sense that I was an outsider, socially and culturally, then and thereafter, no matter how hard I tried to fit in.

The doubt that I was as competent as others ...

Such thoughts told me that I was in America. My new life was not easy. What the future held for me I was not sure. So the old memories, though painful at times, had becoming quite reassuring.

So I turned my thoughts back, to China, to the pig farm where I worked on the night shift and acquired the habit of waking up at three o'clock (Yang 1997, 1).

As Rae Yang notes in the front matter, introspection informs her narrative. 'In this book the italicized parts are meant to show what I thought and how I felt when the events were unfolding, in contrast with my understanding of such events afterwards' (Yang 1997, xi).

Seeking the self through introspection is more aligned with the task that Western autobiographers set themselves than with the one set by Chinese autobiographers. Rae Yang's examination of her interiority is evidence of the influence of Western individualist culture and autobiographical expression on her writing. This is because this manner of perceiving and expressing the self is not a typical characteristic of the Chinese. Although Zhu Dongrun, a Chinese critic of Chinese autobiography, argues that recounting one's thoughts is a literary skill that has a long history in Chinese literature (see for example Zhu 2006[1942], 125), it is basically not undertaken for the purpose of defining a unified and individual self, as the Chinese concept of self remains intrinsically relational.

Yu Dafu's autobiographical text 'Chunlun' is an illustration of how Western autobiography influenced Chinese autobiography. Yu Dafu was a leading writer, who actively emulated Western autobiography to portray an individuated self. 'Chunlun' is the representative product of Westernised Chinese autobiography. By depicting his thoughts, Yu Dafu portrayed a 'submissive, passive, and self-deluding' self (Goldman 1977, 5). His indulgence in exposing his interiority marks 'the rise of individualism, a psychological phenomenon, or as subjectivity in literary terms' during the time of the New Cultural Movement (Ng 2003, 8). The adoption of Western literary devices was an attempt by Chinese writers to assist them in the task of modernising China in the hope of halting what they saw as its decline.

However, such advocacy of Western literary devices involved a fundamental contradiction. The basic and ultimate motivation of learning from the West was to rejuvenate the nation and bring about social transformation, to change the backwardness they felt jeopardised the nation (Goldman 1977, 1–14). But privileging individualism leads to a heterogeneous world beyond the self, which would potentially compromise the relational, national self so intrinsic to a sense of 'Chineseness.' In addition, for those Chinese writers whose substantial schooling fell into the Confucian tradition, their Confucian collectivistic self was deeply rooted in their selves. It was difficult for them to identify with Western individualistic values or to prioritise individualistic interests over national welfare, especially in the early twentieth century when China was politically weak and socially fragmented.

The individuated concept of the self Yu Dafu attempted to introduce and the long-established collectivistic tradition of the Chinese self were intrinsically contradictory. Consequently, although Chinese writers like Yu Dafu made many breakthroughs in literature and had some influence on traditional culture, they failed

to change the landscape of Chinese autobiographical literature. Historical-biographical expression and the collectivistic, value-oriented canon of *Chunqiu*-writing maintained their central position, shaping Chinese autobiography even today.

Another exemplar is Yu Dafu's contemporary, Hu Shi, who produced his life-writing titled *Sishi zishu* (*Self-narrative at Forty* 四十自述). In the preface, he admitted that, however hard he tried to remain conscious of writing an autobiography following the convention of modern Western autobiography, he was drawn back to the traditions of historical-biographical conventions (Hu 1993[1933], 4). Ng argues that the reason for Hu Shi's regression to Chinese autobiographical traditions is that he was more concerned with the traditional task of the biographer or autobiographer, which was to meld the self into an objective account of contemporary events. Such an approach mitigates against exploration of one's interiority (Ng 2003, 91–118).

Indeed, China-based autobiographies illustrate that Western-style individualistic revelations of one's interiority have not enjoyed a wide application in China. The values and standards of Western literature emerging from individualistic societies are remote from those of Chinese literature. Exposing one's interiority as an autobiographical device has not been prevalent in China till today. The articles collected in *Writing Lives in China, 1600–2010: Histories of the Elusive Self* reveal that contemporary Chinese literature is still heavily influenced by the heritages of Chinese autobiographical and cultural traditions (Dryburgh and Dauncey 2013). Rae Yang's searching her interiority for self-knowledge is rarely found in her China-based contemporaries' self-narratives. This distinction suggests that Rae Yang was more influenced by Western cultural and literary traditions than those who remained in China and who were less exposed to Western influences.

***Wild Swans*: a familial self**

Differing from Rae Yang, who recounts her story by recollecting issues related to national affairs, Jung Chang situates herself within her family. Except for a brief and superficial mention about Chinese political life at the end of the text, Jung Chang does not include experiences that can significantly connect her concerns with the interests of the nation. What she stresses throughout the narrative is her individuality. She reiterates that she is criticised for a lack of collectivistic concern, which, however, she includes as a testimony to the repression of individuality and the suppression of freedom under the rule of the CPC. Despite the intensive awareness of her self, she integrates her own story into the story of her family as represented by her mother and maternal grandmother. She packages her individual self as a familial self. She identifies her self within the framework of familial relationships. She is a daughter of her mother and a granddaughter of her maternal grandmother. These three women constitute a familial story of three generations of Chinese women.

Therefore, *Wild Swans* in a strict sense is a combination of two biographies and one autobiography. She chronicles the stories of the three generations of women. She turns their lives into a single story by constructing continuity and coherence within the mother-daughter stories. Following William James's notion of 'empirical self' (James 1950[1890], 291), Jung Chang's grandmother and mother are her extended selves. They all contribute to Jung Chang's sense of self. Therefore, *Wild Swans* can be read as Jung Chang's autobiography, through which she expresses her self. James argues that '[t]he Empirical Self of each of us is all that he is tempted to call by the name of *me*' (James 1950[1890], 291, upper case and italics in original). The Dutch psychologist Huber J. M. Hermans explains that James's concept of 'empirical self' suggests a distinction between the 'I' and the 'Me'. The 'I' is the

self-as-knower who has a sense of sameness through time, a feeling of individuality, and who can reflect on the experience and exercise subjectivity. The 'Me' is the self-as-known. The implication of the 'Me' extends to those that the 'Mine' includes (Hermans 2001, 244). James states,

a man's Self is the sum total of all that he CAN call his, not only his body and his psychic powers, but his clothes and his house, his wife and children, his ancestors and friends, his reputation and works, his lands and horses, and yacht and bank-account (James 1950[1890], 291, upper case and italics in original).

In other words, the sense of self is conceptualised not only by observing the 'Me' as an individual entity but also by integrating all the sources that could be accounted as the 'Mine'. Based on this theory, Jung Chang's grandmother and mother serve as the indispensable sources drawn by Jung Chang to build her own sense of self.

From the perspective of personal relations, by narrating her mother and grandmother's stories, Jung Chang locates her self within her familial connections. Her self is interpersonally and relationally represented in terms of the social understanding of the self (Brewer and Gardner 1996, 84). With reference to her mother and grandmother, *Wild Swans* undoubtedly portrays the familial self of Jung Chang. This ready self-identification within the familial system reflects the legacy of where the self is placed within a hierarchy in Chinese culture: the nation, family, and individual.

Jung Chang's account begins with Chang's grandmother's life. She grew up from being a girl in a feudal family to become a concubine, and later a doctor's wife

(instead of continuing her fate as a concubine). Chang's mother spent her girlhood in a Japanese colony, joined in the Chinese revolution for the construction of a new China, and became a member of the CPC. Jung Chang, born in the new China into a highly ranked official family, grew up during the Cultural Revolution. At the age of twenty-six, she migrated to the UK. Jung Chang's leaving China for the UK concludes the narrative.

By telling the story of three generations of Chinese women, Jung Chang intends to paint a picture of the life of all Chinese women who lived through the years 1909 to 1978. In this period, China experienced drastic political and social change. Keeping her eye on this national history, Jung Chang carefully considers its link with her familial history. In this way, she constructs the sense that these three women represent all Chinese women in the twentieth century. She thus paints her family's history on the vast canvas of China's modern history. For Western readers, who mostly had a limited knowledge of China, the ostensible authority of an autobiography imbued Jung Chang's version of modern Chinese history with authority too. Western readers were willing to accept the facticity of her accounts. It is of no wonder that she is praised in the West for her 'narrative honesty' (see for example Allardice 2005; Thurston 1992, 1207).

However, although autobiographies are popularly regarded as authoritative, their 'true claims' might not withstand scrutiny. As Mobo Gao argues, Jung Chang's 'historical' writing is merely a personal account within the veil of historical facticity. Moreover, her rendition of Chinese history aligns with Western anti-Communist rhetoric (Gao 1995, 52–54). As Gao argues, Jung Chang 'makes the lives of the three women all the more tragic because what underlies it is the fact that every Chinese takes the miserable history of China for granted' (Gao 1995, 52). Because *Wild*

Swans became a bestseller in the West, Western readers too took the ‘miserable history’ of China for granted. But this ostensible ‘miserable history’ is more complex and varied than Jung Chang allows for. The external world beyond Jung Chang’s family, against the entire history of three generations, is monolithically oppressive and hostile.

As a reviewer commented, *Wild Swans* is ‘a rich, moving account of the lives of three ordinary, yet extraordinary Chinese women,’ living through ‘the warlord period, the war with Japan, the civil war, and the establishment of the People’s Republic of China through the Cultural Revolution’ (Goldman 1995, 914). Jung Chang shows that, despite living different lives in different historical moments, these three women share the same personal courage in their struggle for survival. Their stories respectively represent the progressive phases of Chinese women’s liberation from feudalism, Communism to Western liberalism. Her grandmother’s life as a concubine and suffering from ‘bound feet’ are the tokens of feudal China, which represent the physical and spiritual oppression that Chinese women suffered in feudal China. Her mother is portrayed as a mother busy with work and allowed little time to care for herself and her children. Despite this, she is still criticised for a lack of collectivist concern. And, what is more, much blame comes from her husband, a Communist official who abides strictly by CPC regulations. She lives with both physical and emotional constraints in Communist China. As for Jung Chang herself, she is deprived of personal freedom and the right to continue her regular schooling during the Cultural Revolution. It is only in the West that she discovers who she really is and finds happiness. Jung Chang’s leaving China for the UK signifies the thorough liberation of Chinese women. Chinese women’s salvation is in the West.

This theme, that the hope of Chinese women's liberation rests in the West, is epitomised in the metaphorical title *Wild Swans* and implied in the Chinese translation of the title 鸿 (hóng). By elaborating different connotations of 'wild swans' from Chinese and Western linguistic and cultural resources, Jung Chang constructs the representation of a Chinese woman who escapes China and realises self-fulfilment in the West. In the English expression, the modifier 'wild' conveys the connotation of 'freedom.' Together with 'swan,' 'wild swans' evokes an image of nobility and gracefulness, with the instinct for the pursuit of freedom. Using 'wild swans' to allegorise the three women indicates their excellent individual qualities and their aspiration for freedom.

However, the English version of the expression does not contain the implications of Chinese women seeking their liberation by moving from China to the West and the superiority of Western societies over Chinese society. In this case, the Chinese title 鸿 meets these ends. In the Chinese cultural and linguistic context, 鸿 not only refers to a kind of large water bird, it also bears cultural significance. There is a household Chinese saying: '燕雀安知鸿鹄之志 (yànquè ān zhī hóngú zhī zhì).' It means 'how a sparrow knows a giant swan's grand ambitions.' This saying comes from a fable. As 鸿 is a migratory bird, it flies great distances to a new place every year. 燕雀 (passerine birds) are not migratory birds and do not fly great distances. They have no idea about the significance of 鸿's flight and laugh at 鸿 thinking it is stupid. 鸿 responds to the laughter saying 'how a finch understands a swan's ambition?' Chinese people often quote this saying to express their personal ambitions that cannot be understood by ordinary people. By allegorising the self as 鸿, Jung Chan implies that she flies to the West where she realises her ambition of

self-fulfilment, and her personal success in the West symbolises that Chinese women's liberation is to be found in the West.

The above discussion reveals that Jung Chang constructs her narrative following Western autobiographical conventions so as to assert her subjectivity. In doing so she also appeals to Western anti-Communist rhetoric. But meanwhile she proclaims narrative authority by means of constructing the familial self, and setting her family's history in the context of China's history. By elaborating the linguistic and cultural resources of the West and China, she allegorises herself as a 'wild swan' recognised by Western readerships, and as 鴻 to impart some oriental flavour to Western audiences. The composite of Jung Chang's self in *Wild Swans* demonstrates Jung Chang straddling Chinese and Western cultural and literary traditions.

Red Azalea: an individual self

Distinguished from Rae Yang's national self and Jung Chang's familial self, Anchee Min's self as the authorial 'I' is individual. The main feature of Anchee Min's personal account is her intimate description of sexuality. She places the recollections of sexuality at the centre of the narrative. Immediately the narrative conveys a very individual sense of the self. She portrays herself as a person who is strong-willed, intelligent, and precocious due to the burden of adult responsibility laid on her at a tender age. Confined within the politicised social environment of the Cultural Revolution, she was not allowed to conduct subjectivity conspicuously. Consequently she found that sexuality was the space where she could exercise her agency.

While she stayed on the farm away from her home, she traded love affairs for political protection and to assist in her ambition to become a famous actress. To play the main female role in the 'revolutionary' opera *Red Azalea* commissioned by Jiang

Qing—Mao's wife—was her goal. She entered into a lesbian affair with her leader so as to get political protection, while also meeting her adolescent bodily desires. Later, she was selected to be a candidate for the main role in *Red Azalea*, which was to be staged in Shanghai. She thus got the chance to leave the farm and return to her home city, Shanghai. Hence, she terminated the lesbian relationship with her leader. The production of *Red Azalea* was supervised by Jiang Qing's closest associate. So, in order to realise her dream of playing the main role, Anchee Min developed an intimate relationship with Jiang Qing's associate. However, shortly after she was cast in the main role, the downfall of Jiang Qing brought a halt to her dream. She ended up working as a set clerk at the film studios. Thinking life in China meaningless, she managed to leave China in 1984 with the help of a friend in the US.

Anchee Min's recollections are self-evidently distinctive from Rae Yang, Jung Chang and the other Western-based authors' narratives discussed previously. Her text is characterised by the description of the high-keyed lesbian relationship, and other intimate affairs. In this way, Anchee Min establishes a close link between her self-portrayal and sexuality. By describing her innermost interiority, she highlights her subjectivity. A sense of intensive individuality is expressed through recounting sexuality. By deploying intimate and private romantic affairs as narrative materials, she portrays a salient individuated self. What makes her self special and intensively individuated is that she not only recollects her sexual development, but also highlights her homosexual affair. Among various sources for displaying her individuality, Anchee Min chooses sexuality and homosexuality as the subjects of her personal account. Such depiction of one's sexuality is rare in Chinese autobiographical tradition or in Chinese culture. However, it is not rare in Western culture and literary tradition.

Red Azalea is primarily the product of Anchee Min's exposure to Western cultural and autobiographical influences. It was in the West that she learned to reveal herself through introspection and to recount her inner life. When she explained why she produced *Red Azalea*, she said she intended to express her 'most primitive self' (Farmanfarmaian 2000, 66). The exploration of the 'primitive self' is actually the fruit of the course of creative writing that she took after she moved to the US for the purpose of improving her English proficiency. When she arrived in the US, she knew fewer than 500 English words. In the US, her writing career began with a composition class for learning English. *Red Azalea* was an essay written as a course assignment. The feedback for the essay noted that she was a 'lousy writer,' but that she had 'great material' about her past life in China (Farmanfarmaian 2000, 66). After she 'rewrote it and rewrote it and rewrote it,' eight years later she completed *Red Azalea* (Farmanfarmaian 2000, 67).

Anchee Min's project of translating her life into an autobiography involved learning a foreign language, learning Western literary devices, responding to her publisher's demands, and writing for a Western readership. These factors helped shape Anchee Min's tale. Although she claimed, and was claimed by others, to own 'great raw materials' pertaining to the Cultural Revolution, she only briefly experienced the frenzied Red Guard period and the peak of the rustication movement because she was too young to seriously engage in the events of the Cultural Revolution.

The zealous Red Guard activities took place during the first two years of the decade-long Cultural Revolution, 1966–1968, when Anchee Min was aged between nine and eleven. When she was sent down to the countryside, it was 1974 and the Cultural Revolution was drawing to an end. Lacking experience of any deep

involvement in the Cultural Revolution, Anchee Min hardly portrays a collectivistic self, as Rae Yang did in relation to the Cultural Revolution. And her limited experience could not provide a sufficiently reliable account of the Cultural Revolution. It might be for this reason that Anchee Min composed a personal story related to her recollections regarding her sexuality, though she was pushed to make it pertinent to the Cultural Revolution. It conveys her sense of individuality cherished in the West, and also with a Western readership in mind it is easily accessible and familiar material.

However, because Anchee Min sets her narrative in the context of the Cultural Revolution, it is more than a coming-of-age story concerning her sexuality. Lacking sufficient personal experience, and disengaged from the cultural and literary norms or traditions associated with a collectivist culture, Anchee Min turned to fiction and Western autobiographical conventions to construct her story of an individuated subject. For this reason even some Western readers assess Anchee Min as ‘an expert at reinvention’ and that *Red Azalea* is a ‘memoir-cum-novel’ (Farmanfarmaian 2000, 66). *Red Azalea* is very much a product of Western cultural and literary influences. It is a work of fiction masquerading as autobiography, but nevertheless one that in the eyes of Western readers lent further credence to the notion of fearful oppression of Chinese adolescents during the Cultural Revolution. In light of Paul Eakin’s notion of ‘living autobiographically’ (Eakin 1999, 2005, 2008), this text reflects how Anchee Min lives autobiographically in the context of the West.

Summary

The examination of these three texts outlines the authorial self-identifications of Rae Yang, Jung Chang, and Anchee Min. And their selves they construct exemplify the

other six Western-based authors of their cohort. Compared with China-based authors' texts such as Zhang Xincan's *A Diary of a Red Adolescent Girl* and Liang Xiaosheng's *A Monologue of a Red Guard*, Western-based narratives differ not only in terms of the narrating self and the narrated self, but also in terms of the authorial self. China-based authorial selves remain framed by the heritages of Chinese self-identification and its autobiographical traditions. Both culturally and literarily Chinese authors express the collectivistic sense of the self. China-based autobiographers do not carry on the task of constructing stories to demonstrate that their innate individual subjectivity is powerful enough for them to have prevailed over the surrounding political, economic, or social adversities, nor do they privilege their individuality and self-interests over those of the family or nation.

For China-based writers who narrate themselves within Chinese collectivistic cultural and autobiographical conventions, their collectivistic self-concept is implicitly expressed. Therefore, although there is no high-keyed, self-proclaimed concern about the national welfare of China, their 'Chineseness' is expressed effortlessly without any gratuitous mention of doing so. In contrast, the Chinese writers who migrated to the West in the aftermath of the Cultural Revolution express their sense of 'Chineseness' overtly. However, as I argued, this sense of 'Chineseness' is more a personal claim to a particular identity arising from the exploration of one's interiority than a melding of the individuated subject into the broader river of Chinese collectivist culture.

How this manifests differs. As demonstrated by Rae Yang, Jung Chang, and Anchee Min, they managed their authorial selves by way of regulating their subjectivity between the cultural heritages of Western individualism and Chinese collectivism so as to create ostensibly homeostatic autobiographical subjects. Rae

Yang adopts a transcendent interpretation of victimisation under the Cultural Revolution. She follows the Confucian and Daoist way to reconcile adversities with the broader historical scope and longer personal lifespan, which achieves a sense of humanity in her narrative. By distancing the self from Chinese politics, she lowers the expression of patriotism and highlights her individual self. But, however hard she expresses an individual self, she seems habitually concerned about the future of China, though in a humanistic sense.

In the guise of historical-biographical writing, Jung Chang displaces Chinese history, culture, and people under the gaze of Western liberalism. She generalises her individuated self to supposedly represent all Chinese women and Chinese women's liberation. The process of liberation from China to the West is an echo of Francis Fukuyama's bold conclusion that Western liberalism will be the ultimate form of society. The last triumph belongs to Western liberal democracy (Fukuyama 1992). Writing in this anti-Communist rhetoric, Jung Chang narrated a story of Chinese women finding salvation and liberation in the West.

Anchee Min's intimate writing and lesbian affairs mark her progress to an individuated self. Despite increasing Western influences and the process of globalisation, Chinese literary traditions mostly eschew first-person accounts of their sexual awakening, especially homosexual accounts. Even today, such expressions in literature are rare. Anchee Min's text is primarily the product of Western cultural and literary influences.

All in all, as Rae Yang, Jung Chang, and Anchee Min's authorial selves demonstrate, Western-based Chinese authors of the Cultural Revolution were influenced by their exposure to, and their domicile, in the West. However, they also retain something of their motherland's cultural and literary traditions. When

confronted with these two different sets of influences, they struggle in-between. Their agency might enable them to decide which side they stand closer to, but even when engaging more with Western cultural and literary devices, the legacy of their Chinese heritage is still discernible, to a greater or lesser extent. The authors were faced with conflicting values, which they had to deal with. Scrupulous negotiation was needed between Western individualistic cultural and autobiographical conventions on one side, and Chinese collectivistic culture and autobiographical traditions on the other. Subject to the immediate influences of Western cultural and literary traditions, these Western-based Chinese authors translated their authorial selves into generic individuated selves. But narrative nuances still distinguish them from conventional Western autobiography. This is evidence of the entanglement that Western-based Chinese authors were faced with in identifying themselves in the diasporic context.

Conclusion

Claiming narrative authority in Western literary and cultural contexts

This thesis has read eleven autobiographies set against the background of China's Cultural Revolution and published in the West during the 1980s and 1990s by Chinese who had lived through the event and who had subsequently migrated to Western countries. Among these eleven texts, two were written by intellectuals and the rest were by members of the Cultural Revolution generation. Given their writing emerged during a particular period—the 1980s and 1990s—and this body of work's formulaic quality in respect to evoking a sense of victimhood under the Cultural Revolution and the CPC's rule, it was categorised by Western critics as the 'literature of the wounded.' In its account of trauma caused by the Cultural Revolution it shares similarities with China-based 'Scar literature' that emerged in China during the 1980s. However, although China-based and Western-based literatures both pertain to the same historical and sociopolitical moment and events—China's Cultural Revolution—the two categories of texts portray different notions of selfhood. Western-based narratives exemplified by these eleven texts display Western-style features of autobiography, while those produced in China bear the legacies of Chinese literary and autobiographical traditions. In format, Western-based narratives were published in the form of books. Within this cohort, texts by members of the Cultural Revolution generation map the whole course of the authors' life experiences. And texts by the Chinese intellectuals within this cohort recount experiences during the CPC's 'thought reform.' Thematically, these diasporic narratives express deep traumatic feelings in relation to the sufferings inflicted during the Cultural Revolution.

For the texts authored by Western-based Chinese intellectuals, as demonstrated by Ningkun Wu's *A Single Tear* and Nien Cheng's *Life and Death in Shanghai*, they focus on narrating their lives during 'thought reform,' something collectively experienced by Chinese intellectuals in the Maoist era. Ningkun Wu's narrative consists of three intertwined episodes and conveys the idea that so-called 'thought reform' did not alter his way of thinking, but only compromised his patriotic intention and wasted his academic career. Nien Cheng's success in persisting in her genteelism expresses her justification for adopting a Western-style life and enjoying material wealth. Both Ningkun Wu and Nien Cheng's narratives portray themselves as victims of the PRC. Although they provide some historical and social context, the concentration on individual miseries divorces them from their surrounding conditions and presents them as passive subjects of the CPC's malfeasance. The strong sense of self-interest and self-centredness highlights the individual as a singular entity and thus reduces the sense of the self being immersed in a collectivistic entity. In other words, a sense of individual subjecthood distinguishes Ningkun Wu and Nien Cheng's texts from the personal accounts produced by intellectuals based in China that reflect on the same period and series of events. The latter group retains the tradition of perceiving the individual as a constituent element in a broader collectivistic entity.

Diasporic personal narratives authored by the younger generation—as compared with more senior authors represented by Ningkun Wu and Nien Cheng—focus on their transition from childhood to adulthood, which mainly fell during the first thirty years of the history of the PRC. Their retrospective construction of a unified self across time—from immaturity to maturity and adulthood—is characteristic of the genre of *Bildungsroman*, the typical form of much Western

autobiography, in which an innate and stable personality is the foundation for future growth. The notion of the self that underpins the narratives is fundamentally consistent with the Western concept of the self as a rational, self-sufficient individual entity.

Comparatively, China-based autobiographies differ from those written in the West. With regard to format, China-based narratives appear mainly in two formats: a few book-length publications but more commonly as essays published in newspapers or magazines, or collected into edited books. Book-length narratives are mostly authored by established writers and scholars, such as Yang Jiang, Mao-Dun 茅盾, Ba Jin 巴金, Ji Xianlin 季羨林 and Xu Yuanchong 许渊冲.³² Younger writers, for example members of the Cultural Revolution generation, commonly published their personal accounts in the form of essays. *Wasting and Rising: Fifty-five Educated Youths' Life Stories* edited by He Shiping 何世平 is an exemplar of the younger generation's self-narratives. There are some personal accounts published as books, but they are often fictional accounts based on actual experiences, for example Liang Xiaosheng's *A Red Guard's Confessions*, and Lao-gui 老鬼's *Xuese huanghun* (*Blood Red Sunset* 血色黄昏) (see Guo 2009; Xu 2012; Xu 2000). Zhang Xincan's *A Diary of a Red Adolescent Girl* is the only book-length personal account of the Cultural Revolution generation. It is compiled from her diary entries kept during the Cultural Revolution.

The difference in publication format between Western-based and China-based authors suggests that diasporic authors generally enjoy more confidence in telling personal stories than China-based authors do. Their confidence has little to do

³² Yang Jiang, Mao-Dun and Ba Jin are distinguished writers. Xu Yuanchong is a famous translator. Ji Xianlin is a renowned scholar specialising in Indologist studies. They all published their personal accounts.

with who they are and what they experienced. In the West, seemingly everyone has the authority to turn his or her personal life into a book. By contrast, in China book-length autobiographies are normally linked with the social recognition of the author. An established figure has the authority to transpose his or her life into a book. The distinction in authority reflects the difference in self-perception between Westerners and Chinese. The Western concept of the self in the modern sense is the product of the Augustinian tradition blended with Western individualism formed during the Enlightenment. Understanding the self as a rational entity derives from Augustinian Christian philosophy and this notion endures and remains central to how the individual is understood in contemporary Western societies (Matthews 1999). In this sense, Western societies are still shaped by Augustinian traditions. The Western way of thinking, as Alvin Plantinga says, ‘grows out of Augustinian roots’ (Plantinga 1999[1992], 1).

Under this tradition, maturity is reached through realising the self as a rational, independent subject. Personal growth is the process of recognising one’s essential nature and believing that this nature determines who one is. ‘Many of Augustine’s most characteristic preoccupations, whether with introspective self-examination, with human motivation, with scepticism, with the workings of language, or with time and history, are also our preoccupations today’ (Matthews 1999, ix). Writing in the West, Chinese autobiographers claimed authorial authority by constructing a Western concept of the self. In accordance with this concept, they judiciously collected and arranged their recollections so as to construct the sense of a unified stable self who has survived across time and through life’s vicissitudes. For example, Ningkun Wu and Nien Cheng survived persecution under the CPC’s ‘thought reform’ by relying on their individual courage and resilience. In this way

they obtain narrative authority from Western literary conventions. Authority, and perhaps too their popular appeal, is also gained from the anti-Communist rhetoric so prevalent in the West at the time these books were published.

For the writers of the Cultural Revolution generation, the genre of *Bildungsroman* offers narrative authority in its concern with the process of self-formation. *Bildung* (self-education) means that one gains recognition of the unchanging essence of existence of the self in terms of ontological reason (Hall and Ames 1987, 72). ‘To be a person is to function optimally with regard to rational ends’ (Hall and Ames 1987, 72). This idea is expressed in the famous phrase ‘cogito ergo sum’ (Habermas 1998[1987], 18). The phrase demonstrates the recognition of human subjectivity in self-understanding. Hegel elucidates it as a structure of self-relation, featuring ‘freedom’ and ‘reflection.’ ‘The greatness of our time rests in the fact that freedom, the peculiar possession of mind whereby it is at home with itself in itself, is recognized’ (Hegel 1896, 423, cited in Habermas 1998[1987], 17–18). The term ‘subjectivity,’ as Hegel considers it, carries four primary connotations in the West:

- (a) *individualism*: in the modern world, singularity particularized without limit can make good its pretensions; (b) *the right to criticism*: the principle of the modern world requires that what anyone is to recognize shall reveal itself to him as something entitled to recognition; (c) *autonomy of action*: our responsibility for what we do is a characteristic of modern times; (d) finally, *idealistic philosophy* itself: Hegel considers it the work of modern times that philosophy

grasps the self-conscious (or self-knowing) Idea (Hegel, cited in Habermas 1998[1987], 17, italics and upper case in original).

These four connotations suggest the moral implications of individuals in Western culture. Each individual is supposed to enjoy the freedom of exercising individuality of will. Each individual has the right to 'pursue the ends of his particular welfare only in harmony with the welfare of everyone else' (Habermas 1998[1987], 17–18). Living in the 'bliss of self-enjoyment' is the justified welfare of individuals in Western culture (Habermas 1998[1987], 18). In literature, the expression of self-realisation 'becomes the principle of art appearing as a form of life' (Habermas 1998[1987], 18). It is from this understanding that autobiography was first conceptualised as a genre peculiar to Western culture.

As I have argued, the nine Western-based texts of the Cultural Revolution generation are constructed in the genre of *Bildungsroman*, hence they form a subgenre of Western autobiography. Distinguished from Western-based authors who were exposed to the modern Western concept of the self, China-based contemporaries remained influenced by the Chinese concept of the self and wrote within Chinese cultural and literary traditions. Although in the early twentieth century Western autobiographical forms were introduced into China, and gained some exposure and currency, its influence was only transient. Chinese society has not developed the concept of the self as an isolated individual as in Western societies, or as a stable, unitary entity experiencing a transition from immaturity to maturity. Maturity in the West is measured according to one's degrees of self-awareness. In China the concept of the self is framed within the assessment of social significance or value. Maturity is represented by the perfect fitness of the individual in society or

nature. The significance of the individual lies in his/her personal contribution to the harmony of the surrounding world. This self-perception requires a selfless concern for the public interest.

Selflessness is assumed to be cultivated throughout one's lifetime. Self-cultivation is thought to be the necessary way to realise the self. Value-oriented self-perception is the idea acknowledged by all major Chinese philosophical schools: Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism. Confucius's succinct portrayal of his self-development illuminates the concept of the Chinese self. He states:

At fifteen, I had my mind bent on learning. At thirty, I stood firm. At forty, I had no doubts. At fifty, I knew the decrees of Heaven. At sixty, my ear was an obedient organ for the reception of truth. At seventy, I could follow what my heart desired, without transgressing what was right.

吾十有五而志于学，三十而立，四十而不惑，五十而知天命，六十而耳顺，七十而从心所欲，不逾矩 (Confucius, Mencius et al. 1971[ca. 8th century BC – ca. 3rd century BC], 146–147).

This passage outlines Confucius's life from fifteen to seventy years of age. At fifteen he devotes himself to learning. At thirty he becomes an independent person. At forty he establishes himself as an authoritative person who has understood the significance of his self within the scope of his intimate community. At fifty his knowledge expands and his cosmological understanding has formed. He views his life from the perspective of a broader nature and a longer history. At sixty he has become calm in the face of all changes, good or bad, as he has established his own philosophical

understanding of the self and the world. His thinking could penetrate the essence of all phenomena. When he reaches the age of seventy, he has become a proper individual whose behaviour is always in compliance with social norms, without needing conscious self-regulation. Only at this stage does he show that he has gained the truth about life and the self. This passage could be read as a mini autobiographical account. It traces the process of Confucius's self-transformation by means of disintegrating 'his preoccupations with selfish advantage towards the sensibilities of the profoundly relational person' (Hall and Ames 1987, 115).

Confucius's self-tracing suggests that Chinese people do not assume a natural and stable core around which the self develops into maturity. Self-development is the process of cultivating the sense of the self as a relational person, within which altruism is implied. Basically, a person who pursues ego-grounded interests is a 'retarded individual' (Hall and Ames 1987, 117). Therefore, in Chinese culture, personality—which is valued in the West—is not privileged so that it occupies the core position in self-understanding, though it is acknowledged. Tao Qian's *Biography of Master Five Willows* is regarded as the representative and earliest text presenting the individuated self in China. However, despite the focus on individuality, Tao Qian's ostensible description of self-interest aims to express his discontent with the state of politics from which he emerges. His underlying self-perception is still a relational concept.

As argued by Hofstede's comparative studies on Chinese and Western societies, the Chinese self-concept is moral-oriented, while the Western self-concept is right-oriented (Hofstede 1991, 73). To a significant degree, the difference in self-concept between China and the West remains identifiably distinct. One manifestation of the moral-orientation of the Chinese self is that China-based personal narratives

inherit the legacy of *Chunqiu*-style. Narratives are often short in length, fragmentary in content, and oriented to social value. Narrative authority is determined by its collectivistic values in the domain of Confucian society and/or by its holistic values in the domain of Daoist nature. Chinese literary work is supposed to bear the didactic significance of promoting harmony within society or harmony within the universe. To do this an author must be qualified, and the needed qualification is termed ‘name’ (see below). The requisite values are generalised as the ‘Way’ as conveyed by *Chunqiu*-style. Not everyone is qualified to conduct the didactic role. This is why Sima Qian introduced his family heritage of being Grand Scribes, so as to articulate his qualification, or ‘name.’ By doing so, he is claiming that his ‘name’ qualified him for his work and thus proclaimed his writerly authority. This is why there was a tradition in ancient times where authors put their biographies into their book prefaces. It is thanks to this tradition that a vast body of life-writing was accumulated, forming a repertoire of traditional Chinese life-writing across its long history. With respect to the relation between ‘name’ and narrative authority, a Confucian aphorism is still frequently heard today:

If names be not correct, language is not in accordance with the truth of things. If language be not in accordance with the truth of things, affairs cannot be carried out to success.

名不正则言不顺, 言不顺则事不成.

(Confucius, Mencius et al. 1971[ca. 8th century BC– ca. 3rd century BC], 263–264)

‘Name’ refers to a qualification for carrying out a particular job or activity. In order to avoid allocating a task to a person with insufficient qualification or authority, it became a common practice for Chinese people to venerate the old and despise the new. They borrowed authority from historically established figures or things in order to give authority to their own words (Long Bojian, quoted in Unschuld 2003, 8). Moreover, influenced by the legacy of historiographical biographical writing, a self-affirmed autobiographical narrative in Chinese society means the author declares full responsibility for narrative authenticity. For these reasons, most China-based personal narratives during the 1980s and 1990s were written by celebrated writers or scholars, while members of the Cultural Revolution generation claimed their recollections to be fictional. China-based younger writers did not have sufficient confidence in their narrative authority.

However, in the West every individual enjoys narrative authority. It has been increasingly so since the West entered the twentieth century. As Ivor F. Goodson, a narratologist, observes, the twentieth century features ‘small individualized narratives’ (Goodson 2013, 11). A personal life story is regarded as a reliable access to the truth, for underpinning this is the faith that the rational individual is stable and reliable. However, personal expressions in Chinese cultural and literary heritages remain primarily within the framework of Confucianism and Daoism, more humanist than individual. For example, Zhang Xincan’s personal concern is directed towards being a selfless person. Liang Xiaosheng’s autobiographical novel is more than the presentation of life during the Cultural Revolution through his personal lens. The significance of Liang Xiaosheng’s narrative rests not only on his personal tragedy, but also on the revelation of the complexity of the Cultural Revolution and the complexity of human beings. The collection of fifty-five ‘educated youths’

rustication stories provides further evidence. Yang Jiang gives an excellent illustration in her autobiographical narratives, *A Cadre School Life* (Yang 1982) and *Lost in Crowd* (Yang 1989). Her stories demonstrate a transcendent sense of the self in the face of hardship and persecution, which represents universal humanity that is embodied in the thoughts of Confucianism and Daoism. As discussed in previous chapters, this sense of the transcendent self differs from the sense of self that emerges from typical Western autobiographies. To interpret the calamity imposed on her during the Cultural Revolution, Yang Jiang allegorises her sufferings as dark clouds in the sky, believing that dark clouds cannot obscure brightness forever (Yang 1989, 52).

However, Western-based narratives indulge in the trope of victimisation under the rule of the CPC. These narratives show a tendency away from the Chinese heritage of life-writing and culture towards the Western heritage of life-writing and culture. The deeper a person is exposed to a culture, the stronger the tendency towards the literary legacies nurtured in that culture, and this tendency is evident in the respective autobiographies.

Endurance and resolution of the ‘scar’: remembering Cultural Revolution experiences in the West

Situated in the historical moment of the post-Cultural Revolution, life-writings by Chinese immigrants to the West are inevitably associated with the memory of the Cultural Revolution. When the historical event of the Cultural Revolution becomes manifest in personal recollections, it is subject to the vagaries and distortions of memory. In the twentieth century, an individual’s memory was valued as an honest testimony of events of the past (Hutton 1993). This is why Western-based personal accounts set against the background of the Cultural Revolution are widely read as

reliable sources of knowledge about the PRC, the CPC, and the Cultural Revolution. However, memory is not infallible, and it is readily influenced. As James Young, a specialist in memory studies, argues ‘[m]emory is never shaped in a vacuum; the motives of memory are never pure’ (Young 1993, 2).

Autobiographies are not objective accounts of one’s past, or the past as a whole. Personal recollections are not insulated from authors’ biases, self-interest or from cultural influences. This is evident in the recollections of experiences during the Cultural Revolution. As Chapter Five argues, due to the exposure to Western cultural and literary traditions, the narratives of Western-based immigrant authors differ from those produced by their Chinese contemporaries based in China. The Cultural Revolution spawned narratives of victimhood both in China and the West. The prevalence of accounts of victimhood reflect individuals’ desire to express discontent with their past suffering and, at the same time, respond to the CPC’s critique of the Cultural Revolution. In China, ‘Scar literature’ was the first genre to appear, featuring exposure of the damage caused by the radical politics adopted during the Cultural Revolution (Louie 1989, 1–13). Shortly afterwards, in the 1980s, autobiographies detailing individual’s victimisation during the Cultural Revolution appeared in the West. Due to the sheer number of these narratives, and their formulaic qualities, critics labelled them the ‘literature of the wounded.’ In this sense it might be proper to think of these diasporic victim writings as an extension of Chinese ‘Scar literature.’ *Son of the Revolution*, *Wild Swans*, and *Spider Eaters* are among the most widely read texts. However, whereas ‘Scar literature’ enjoyed a transient life, the ‘literature of the wounded’ spanned at least two decades between the 1980s and 1990s.

After the CPC stepped away from the radical politics of the Cultural Revolution and intellectuals were rehabilitated from ‘thought reform,’ Chinese literary creation was refreshed with vitality. It was proclaimed that Chinese literature had entered a new era. Literary works produced during the 1980s are therefore called the Literature of the New Era (Wang 2000, xiii; Zhang 1992[1985], 80). The loosening of cultural control allowed diverse styles, methods, schools, and aesthetic pursuits to flourish. Much literature addressed the Cultural Revolution. As Wu Liang, a literary critic observed, ‘[a]round the mid-1980s (particularly 1984–1985), literature in mainland China began to display an increasingly centrifugal tendency’ (Wu 2000, 124). Writers were given freedom to express their individual opinions. Xu Zidong, a literary critic, analysed fifty Chinese novels concerning the Cultural Revolution, published in the PRC during the late 1970s to 1990s. He argued that there was disparity rather than concord within this body of literature. The same actual experience is translated into contradictory personal tales (Xu 2000).

Writers of Literature of the New Era took the Cultural Revolution as fertile terrain to express their thoughts. Several literary genres, among other artistic responses, commemorating the pain of the Cultural Revolution appeared in this post-Cultural Revolution period. The aforementioned ‘Scar literature’ was the first recognised genre to emerge, presenting the horrors and sufferings experienced by the Chinese during this period (Wang 2000, xxiv). For its exposure of the tragedy of the Cultural Revolution, it immediately attracted significant attention and many readers. However, due to the ‘simplistic view that all problems were the fault of the Gang of Four’ (Louie 1989, 7) and its lack of nuance, ‘Scar literature’ shortly gave way to its immediate successor, *fansi wenxue*, or ‘reflection literature.’ It aimed to ‘examine Chinese people’s ideological fanaticism and call for the rejuvenation of humanistic

consciousness' (Wang 2000, xxiv). Other forms of literature that emerged during this period include *xungen* ('root-seeking') and *xianfeng* ('avant-garde') literature (Wang 2000, xxiv; Wu 2000, 124–136). As most writers of these literatures were former *zhiquing* ('educated youth') and their writings described their rusticated experiences, their literature is also generally named *zhiquing* literature ('educated youth' literature) (Wang 2000, xxviii). Zhong Acheng, Han Shaogong, and Zhang Chengzhi are the representatives of 'educated youth' writers. From the perspective of the Cultural Revolution generation, 'Scar literature' and *zhiquing* literature are the most pertinent forms. They embody writers' introspections on their earlier life and on the selves in current social and political conditions.

For Chinese people who are involved in the processes of social change, they obtain an insider point of view that allows readers to experience in situ reflections on the past. Remaining in China, they remain immersed in the sociocultural heritages joining the past and present. In this sense, to some extent, China-based autobiographical accounts might be more objective than Western-based narratives in their account of experiences during the Cultural Revolution. Black and white accounts of victimhood are too simplistic. Many studies have shown that the factors behind the start of the Cultural Revolution are complicated, and objective assessment is not straightforward. For example, works on the rustication movement show that the Cultural Revolution generation was not the first group of Chinese youths sent down to the countryside. Sending urban school-leavers to the countryside was a policy implemented from the early 1950s so as to improve the backward condition of the countryside. It was because of the Cultural Revolution that this policy was pushed to its peak, and it was drawn to an end after the Cultural Revolution (Gu and Ma 1996; Liu 1998; Pan 2002, 2003).

However, viewed from the whole scope of the rustication program, economic factors functioned as the driving force of the policy (Pan 2002, 2003). During the period of the Cultural Revolution, the political purposes of re-education and restoring order joined economic considerations and became more immediate and salient (Bernstein 1977, 58). The assessments of the impacts of the rustication program on Chinese social, political, and economic development are controversial, partially because more long-term consequences have emerged recently, and partially because today's world has changed a lot since then (Chen 2001, 72–73). Dongping Han observes that the program of sending 'educated youths' down to the countryside promoted, in a practical way, the two-way transaction between urban and rural areas. It was beneficial for pushing educational resources to be used equally across society and using educational sources to promote social equality. Besides the benefits of national education, the rusticated life objectively deepened the life-understanding of 'educated youths,' enriching their lives. Han's interviewees impressed Han by the empathetic relationship they established with the villagers. The local people treated the urban youths warmly, and the latter 'generally appreciated what the local people had done for them' (Han 2000, 121). This positive interpersonal relationship between 'educated youths' and peasants is widely described in the Chinese 'literature of educated youths,' such as Shi Tiesheng's *My Faraway Qingping Bay* and the stories collected in *Wasting and Rising: Fifty-five Educated Youths' Life Stories*.

Differing from China-based authors who recollected the past in situ, Chinese immigrants to the West recollected the past in a displaced space—the West, whose circumstances had little to do with their past. The West during the Cold War era—1947–1991—feared the spread of Communism. China was perceived as a 'politically and socially draconian state' (Grice 2002, 111) and in some cases the efforts to

confirm Communist China's atrocities were blatant. As Helena Grice notes, the US actually sponsored Eileen Chang's anti-Communist narratives (Grice 2002, 111). As early as the 1950s the political climate for anti-Communist writing was ripe in the West, particularly in the US under the influence of McCarthyism (Heale 1986; Schrecker 2004).³³ The majority of autobiographies pertaining to Communist China in the 1950s and the 1960s were by those who 'chose to leave China out of dissatisfaction and disagreement with the government' (Ling 1990, 85). Writing within this anti-Communist context, aware of a ready readership for material detailing apparent atrocities within China, and operating in a free market system, most Chinese immigrants chose a marketable way of detailing their experiences of the Cultural Revolution. The keen curiosity about China and effective marketing made for the lasting popularity of this body of literature.

Writing autobiographical narratives entails memory. Memory is something related to time—that is, the past on the one hand, and the present on the other. According to Paul Eakin, the significance of autobiography is more related to the concerns of our present and future lives. Autobiographical memory is oriented to the future. He argues, 'we remodel our pasts to bring them into sync with our sense of our selves and lives in the present, but we also do so in view of our plans for the time to come' (Eakin 2014, 26). This can partially explain why features of Western autobiographical conventions explicitly inform the Western-based immigrant narratives, while features of Chinese autobiographical conventions are carried implicitly. Western-based writers address current exigencies (the present) with an eye to their future lives in the West. As the French historian Pierre Nora argues,

³³ Also see <http://www.coldwar.org/articles/50s/senatorjosephmccarthy.asp>. Retrieved on 12 May 2016.

Memory is life, borne by living societies founded in its name ...

Memory is a perpetually actual phenomenon, a bond tying us to the eternal present ... Memory, insofar as it is affective and magical, only accommodates those facts that suit it; it nourishes recollections that may be out of focus or telescopic, global or detached, particular or symbolic—responsive to each avenue of conveyance or phenomenal screen, to every censorship or projection (Nora 1989, 8–9).

In autobiographies, while the past is recalled supposedly with clarity and accuracy, the processes of memory shape those recollections, as does self-interest. Life stories, therefore, are fallible and do not provide a dependable window on the past. Circumscribed by influences from Western culture, literature, and the legacy of anti-Communist ideology during the 1980s and 1990s, Western-based Chinese authors simplified their interpretations of the Cultural Revolution. From the perspective of individual experience, they pulled memory pertinent to the Cultural Revolution out of the broader context, and now, being domiciled in the West, they are removed from the sociocultural forces that shape domestic (Chinese) responses to that era. For China-based authors, their recollections of experiences during the Cultural Revolution, or of the Cultural Revolution itself, might differ from those held contemporaneously with the Cultural Revolution or its immediate aftermath, but the literary form conveying these recollections remains steeped in Chinese cultural and literary heritage. Hence we find in these texts an orientation that is more collectivist than individualist.

This accounts for why China's 'Scar literature' quickly gave way to other literatures, which complied more closely with expressions of collectivistic values.

Within the collectivistic value-framework of Chinese culture, Mao's devotion to the national welfare and ostensible good intentions are acknowledged and his mistakes forgiven. Self-understanding affiliated with Confucianism and Daoism, two primary philosophical schools shaping China and the Chinese, drive Chinese people to seek reconciliation with the past, including the Cultural Revolution, although reconciliations vary in degree and form. In China-based life-writings, Mao was not charged with despotism, nor was there anti-Communist propaganda. Western-based Chinese authors, on the other hand, attuned to prevalent anti-Communist discourse, present a dichotomised Chinese society divided between an evil Communist government and victimised masses, Mao's despotism and intellectuals' victimisation, and humanity versus inhumanity (see for example Kong 1999, 249; Zarrow 1999, 168).

Unsettled autobiographical selves of diasporic Chinese in the West

Human beings are culturally inscribed, for one's fundamental part of self is shaped by the culture within which one grows up. It is generally agreed that the sense of personhood is socially and psychologically consciously realised in adolescence. By the time the authors of these eleven Western-based Chinese autobiographies discussed in detail here took residency in the West, their fundamental part of the self had been inscribed by Chinese culture. Hence it is of no surprise that their narratives bear influence of both Chinese and Western cultural and literary heritages.

Attempts to define autobiography often end in vain. In most autobiographies the 'I' is at once hero/heroine, narrator, and author, and to a greater or lesser extent this holds true also for domestic Chinese autobiographies. However, some distinctions in how the autobiographical 'I' is expressed are discernible. Modern Western autobiographers primarily concern themselves with 'the task of

reconstructing the unity of a life across time' (Gusdorf 1980[1956], 37). They are aware of themselves as individual egos. Their work reflects an abiding self-consciousness, and typically displays a concern, if not a preoccupation, with finding the self, or demonstrating the self's ability to transcend or advantageously harness the vicissitudes of life. Chinese autobiographical works differ in that the privileging of the individual—to the extent that the narrative achieves coherency through either the quest for or revelation of the unified self, which is a key feature of many modern Western autobiographies—is mostly eschewed. Discovery or revelation of the self, where it exists, is found within or merged into a collective identity or the aspirations of one's group. Hence the 'self' of Chinese autobiography 'is not an individual with a private career' so to speak, 'but a soldier in a long, historic march' (Butterfield in Blackburn 1980, 133–134). Butterfield is referring to African-American autobiography here, but the point holds true for how the 'self' is expressed in Chinese literature too.

Chinese individuals are perceived as integral components of a broader system. Self-knowledge is associated with the role of the individual in keeping the broader system operating harmoniously. It is oriented to those values and morals that are beneficial to collective interests. The narrator 'I' recounts content that illustrates concern about collectivist benefit rather than exploring individual interests. In this self-expression, individual interest is constrained and subject to public interest, as individualistic concern is considered selfish and against the Chinese concept of self.

Measured against the conventions of Chinese and Western autobiography, none of the eleven Chinese autobiographies produced in the West fully comply with either convention. Their autobiographical identities are mixed and struggle in the tension between influences from Western and Chinese autobiographical heritages.

Western-based Chinese intellectuals' texts, as exemplified by Ningkun Wu's *A Single Tear* and Nien Cheng's *Life and Death in Shanghai*, focus on the account of the protagonists' suffering caused by the CPC's 'thought reform' of Chinese intellectuals, through which they praise their individual courage and struggle to survive persecution under 'thought reform.' From this theme we read a tale of a hero/heroine as typically portrayed in a conventional Western autobiography. However, we also see the hero/heroine immersed in the description of events. The 'I' as the narrator peers at exterior events and circumstances in which the narrated 'I' is involved, instead of looking at the interior of the self. This kind of narration reflects the legacy of the Chinese historical-biographical tradition—recording what is visible and tangible to ensure the facticity of the writing. Lastly, from the author's self-interpretation, we read a story of a traditional Chinese intellectual who takes social responsibility as his/her duty. This national self is still, to some extent, preserved by Chinese intellectuals based in the West, and is a quality shared with their contemporaries in China. The tension between discovery or revelation of the self and being 'but a soldier in a long, historic march' is evident (Blackburn 1980, 134)

Similar tensions are evident in the narratives of the Cultural Revolution generation. The autobiographical 'I' in these texts is constructed following the modern Western concept of self so that he or she is presented as a unified, rational, and autonomous individual. However, compared with China-based intellectuals, members of the Cultural Revolution generation based in the West affiliate more with Western cultural and literary heritages. By structuring their stories in the format of *Bildungsroman*, they trace their self-development in line with the modern concept of the Western self. In recounting their past, they structure their texts so as to privilege their individuated selves, but, contradictorily, they narrate stories in which their

subjectivity is thwarted by adversity. In this way, they tell of victimisation under the CPC and the Cultural Revolution. In respect of the authorial self, they mainly express the sense of an individuated self. But the legacy of the Chinese concept of self is to some degree maintained. Rae Yang's 'self' suggests that although she consciously identifies with Western culture so as to privilege her self, she also proclaims a sense of national self and uses Daoist framing to explain her past suffering. The conflict within her self, autobiographically expressed, reveals her unsettled identity in the West. Jung Chang situates herself within her family. Her familial self and the assertion of individuated self are mixed and contradictorily harboured in her autobiographical self. The familial self bears her 'Chineseness' while the individuated self reflects her Western leanings.

Summary

Reading these Western-based personal narratives suggests that life-writing by Chinese immigrants in the West involves a series of complex negotiations between Chinese and Western cultural and literary conventions. The formulaic description of victimisation in China under the rule of the CPC reflects the powerful shaping force for writing and recollecting the past in the Western present. It is from this departure that Jung Chang, Anchee Min, and other diasporic writers started writing of their experiences during the Cultural Revolution, and they did so while domiciled in the West. Notwithstanding their notable affiliation with Western ideology, and their elaborate portrayals of the 'self' in compliance with Western cultural and literary conventions, their Chinese heritage also helps shape the way the 'self' of these texts is constructed.

Those staying in China, however, experienced the dramatic social transformation from Mao's emphasis on politics to Deng Xiaoping's stress on

economics. Many of this generation, when they look back at their spent youth, nostalgically view the ‘heady days of the Cultural Revolution as a time when they were able to discover China and in the process discover themselves’ (Louie 1989, 101). These sentiments are absent from that body of work labelled by critics the ‘literature of the wounded.’ Yet, as mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, it is ‘literature of the wounded’ texts that are still found on high school and university syllabi, and that are read in book clubs, for the supposed insights they provide on China and the Cultural Revolution. As China becomes increasingly influential in world affairs, and one of the world’s leading powers, it can only be hoped that more sophisticated and nuanced accounts of this era will find an equally wide readership in the West.

Appendix 1

A selection of Western-based personal narratives pertaining to the Cultural Revolution, 1980s–1990s

Chinese intellectuals' personal narratives				
No.	Title	Author (surname is capitalised)	First edition	Publisher
1	<i>Life and Death in Shanghai</i>	Nien CHENG (b.1915)	1986	London: Flamingo
2	<i>A Single Tear: A Family's Persecution, Love, and Endurance in Communist China</i>	Ningkun WU (b.1920), in collaboration with his wife, Yikai LI	1993	Boston: Little, Brown and Company
Personal narratives of the Cultural Revolution generation				
1	<i>Son of the Revolution</i>	LIANG Heng (b.1954) and Judith Shapiro	1983	New York: Knopf
2	<i>Born Red: A Chronicle of the Cultural Revolution</i>	GAO Yuan (b.1952)	1987	Stanford: Stanford university Press
3	<i>A Generation Lost: China Under the Cultural Revolution</i>	Zi-ping LUO (b.1950)	1990	New York: Hery Holt and Company
4	<i>Wild Swans: Three Daughters of China</i>	Jung CHANG (b.1952)	1991	London: Flamingo

5	<i>Red Flower of China: An Autobiography</i>	ZHAI Zhenhua (b.1951)	1992	New York: Soho
6	<i>Red Azalea: Life and Love in China</i>	Anchee MIN (b.1957)	1993	London: Victor Gollancz
7	<i>Spider Eaters: A Memoir</i>	Rae YANG (b.1950)	1997	Berkeley: University of California Press
8	<i>A Leaf in the Bitter Wind: A Memoir</i>	Ting-xing YE (b.1952)	1997	St. Paul: Hungry Mind Press
9	<i>Thirty Years in A Red House: A Memoir of Childhood and Youth in Communist China</i>	ZHU Xiao Di (b.1958)	1998	Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press

Notes: Names with all letters capitalised are surnames. The name order remains unchanged as shown on the books.

Appendix 2

A selection of China-based personal narratives of the Cultural Revolution

Chinese intellectuals' texts

- Bai, Hanzhen 白汉贞. 1990. *Luoye zhi mi: Yige nü jiaoshi de xinlu licheng* (*The Secret of the Falling Leaf: A Woman Teacher's Spiritual Journey* 落叶之迷——一个女教师的心路历程). Beijing 北京: Wenhua yishu chubanshe 文化艺术出版社.
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